

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
IHOP BIBLE STUDY  
September 2003

Topic: John 6:60 to 7:24

NOTE: This is our third major section of the Summary Chart of John's Gospel. The overview of these seven sessions is to define the Work of God. In my reflections, this definition has two parts: "To do the work of God," and the "Validity of Jesus' Teachings." Today's session begins to define "The work of God" through the words Helped by God.

Our work for this session: The rational purpose is to understand this statement, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him." (6: 65.) The emotional purpose is to explore this statement, "Stop judging by mere appearance, and make right judgment." (7:24.)

Before you begin to study, write down your understanding of these terms: "eternal life" (6:68); "evil" (7:7); "devil" (6:70); "God's will" (7:17).

I. Read the assignment in one reading.

II. Observe in 6:63 that Jesus is very clear in his understanding of "flesh" and "spirit." This is exactly the difference between "Head Trip Analysis" (the rational process associated with the flesh), and "Gut Trip Analysis" (the intuitional, or spiritual, experience). My personal reflections estimate that this separation of body and spirit was not a problem for the Greek/Roman culture of the Early Church because of its close association with Judaism. However, at the beginning of our Modern Era, around the 16th Century, the invention of science and the scientific method forced the church to decide between living by the flesh or living by the spirit. For some reason, the church denied the scientific world view, and objectified-or made objective "things"-our religious code words. The church of the Middle Ages made religion a "Head Trip" analysis. In the process, we lost the meaning and significance of these words. The result of this choice laid the foundation for our present day confusion about the "world" and the "spirit."

The "world" represents rationality. The "spirit" represents an escape from the world. This is far from the truth! The role of the spirit is to intensify our relationship to the world; the spirit defines and makes meaningful our living in the world.

Isn't this what Paul means in the statement, "We live in the world, but not of the world?" This is the meaning of the words to the song "This world is not my home, I am a stranger here." My home is in the realm of the spirit, but is lived out in my existence in this world. While in this world I am on vacation. My real home is to live with The Meaningfulness (God).

III. Ref: 6:68 "eternal life"

It is helpful to remember that only The Meaningfulness (God) is eternal. As humans, we can choose to live in the shadow of The Meaningfulness, and reap the benefit of eternity.

#### IV. Ref: 7:7 "evil"

There is no other word in our Old Christian Code Words that is more misunderstood than the word "evil." The traditional "Head Trip Analysis" defines the word as that which victimizes us; we are in the power of hopelessness. Nothing can be further from the truth. We are not victims!

Evil always is a lie, but it can be powerful. However, The Lie has no power of its own. It is given power by our decision to give it power. Evil is an illusion representing smoke and mirrors. It looks like the truth, but it smells like the lie that we are victims.

We are not victims. We have a choice to be victims or victors. This is the choice of empowering hopelessness, or to empower hope. The choice is ours.

Frequently, evil is associated with "hell." When we associate "eternity" as the life that is lived with The Meaningfulness, then "hell" is the life denying The Meaningfulness. Hell, like evil, is neither a place nor a person. Hell is a choice we make, and for which we reap the benefits.

#### V. Ref: 6:70 "devil"

The "devil" is The Liar. This is the personification of The Lie. There is no actual figure of the devil, except the one we humans made in our own image (anthropomorphized).

The modern emphasis on these topics is fairly recent. It began in the Modern Era, and during the 20th Century was overemphasized in preaching. This is the foundation of "scare the hell out of us" theology. It is still alive and well in "The Left Behind" series of books, films, etc.

#### VI. Ref: 7:17 "God's will"

This is one of those topics most Christians believe they know, but do not! God's Will gets associated with our bad experiences. This idea is supported by the insurance industry in the idea that the "uncontrollable" must be the Will of God; i.e., tornadoes, hurricanes, forest fires, etc. Again, nothing can be further from the truth.

Each of these things is not the Will of God. These experiences are The Way Life Is (TWLI). We have no control over TWLI. It simply is The Way Life Is.

OK, maybe we can blame God for giving us Free Will. But would we have it any other way? Nothing is pre-determined. Society and individuals are the result of our choices. In this way, we are Co-Creators with The Meaningfulness.

In 1940, a famous theologian (whose name escapes me) wrote the signal definition of The Will of God in a tiny book by the same name. This author gives us three definitions: The Intentional Will of God; The Circumstantial Will of God; and The Ultimate Will of God. God intends only good things for our creation. Yet, circumstances thwart these good intentions, but always God rushes in to make good things happen from bad experiences. Finally, God's Will gets done in spite of-or even because of-the circumstances of life.

VII. With these reflections in mind, turn your study and conversations to answer what it means to be enabled by the Father to come to Jesus. (Be careful of "Head Trip Analysis.")

VIII. Next, turn your reflections to work on this statement of Jesus, "Stop judging by mere appearance, and make right judgment." (7:24.)

What does "judging by appearance" look like? If we were walking down the street and we saw someone judging by appearance, what would we see?

What would we see if we saw people making right judgments?

**IX. HOW DOES ALL OF THIS SUPPORT THE STATEMENT, "BEING HELPED BY GOD?"**