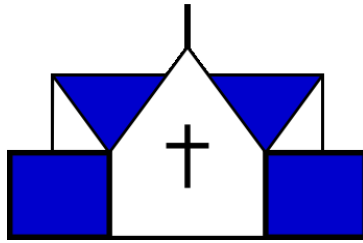


# UPPER BEEDING BAPTIST CHURCH



HOME GROUP STUDIES

AUTUMN 2010

A series of studies from the Gospel of John  
focussing on Jesus' statements

**I AM .....**

## **An introduction to John's Gospel**

John's Gospel was the last of the four to be written, probably around 70 AD, which is later than all of Paul's letters for example. Early Christian writers associated John with the city of Ephesus, and tradition suggests that John wrote the gospel while there. The Apostle had a very definite purpose in writing it. He puts it this way: 'Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20 vv 30-31)

John selected his material carefully with the express intention of helping his readers to understand the true identity of Jesus. In fact around 90% of the material John uses is unique to his Gospel. On the other hand there is no narrative concerning Jesus' birth and childhood, nothing about the temptations, no record of His parables, not even anything about the appointment of the 12 disciples! But in every part of the book Jesus' deity shines through. John chooses the miracles (or 'signs' as he calls them) to reveal the power of His deity and the compassion of His humanity.

The key words of the book are 'life, light, and love'. Jesus is portrayed as coming to give a fuller, more abundant life to men and women; as the light that was in the world in conflict with its darkness; and the source of humanity's true life. John writes of Jesus as the one who sacrificed His life for the world as an expression of God's love.

As we read substantial sections of the Gospel, we should not therefore view it simply as a complete historical record of the life of Jesus. Nor is it a complete record of Jesus' teaching. It differs from the other three Gospels (called the Synoptic Gospels because of their similar material and approaches), but there is no conflict between them. John's approach to the stories, his language and even his written style are different. He writes as an eyewitness of the events, but also as one who has had an opportunity to reflect on them over a long period of time and make sense of their meaning.

The whole book breathes the air of a personal and powerful glimpse of Jesus – The Man who was God, God in the flesh. It was written to encourage us to believe in, trust, and follow Him. May these readings help you to do just that!

## **Suggestions for an approach to all these Home Group studies.**

### **Focus on the passage.**

Read right through the passage set for the occasion and respond to it with some comment about a lesson you learn from it, or a vital truth you see in it. Allow God to speak directly to you through it.

Then response to questions such as:

1. Imagine yourself as being on the scene. How would you have felt about what was going on?
2. What aspect of Jesus' character seems to stand out for you?
3. What situation, or human need, was Jesus responding to?
4. What might the disciples have learned from Jesus' actions and words?
5. How might Jesus' words have encouraged people to follow Him?
6. Is there any evidence that people might have misunderstood Him?
7. Do Jesus' words encourage you to trust Him in some fresh way?

### **Focus on relationships with Jesus.**

1. What kind of person – or people – was Jesus reaching out to in this incident?
2. How would you describe the relationship between Jesus and others involved in the story?
3. Did anything change as a result of Jesus' words and actions?
4. How did Jesus improve the lives of those with whom He came into contact?
5. What did Jesus add to their lives?

### **Focus on your personal relationship with Jesus.**

1. Are you aware of anything lacking in your spiritual experience?
2. Is your walk with Jesus satisfying – or has it grown dull and mechanical?
3. How might this story, and what it shows of Jesus, add to your joy of walking with Him?
4. How might life be changed for you if you knew Jesus better and walked more closely with Him?

### **Focus on how this might work out in practice.**

1. In what way might the example of Jesus cause you to take action of some kind?
2. How might you make a difference to the lives of others as you follow the example of Jesus?
3. Are you prepared – seriously – to make this change in your life a priority?

Use these general questions to approach the studies and then move on to the more specific questions of which the Leader for the evening has a copy.

**Our aims for this series of studies.** There are two main purposes behind this series of studies in the 'I AM' sayings of Jesus in John's Gospel.

***The first, and fundamental one, lies in the purpose that Jesus Himself had.*** He was presenting truth about Himself and His character, encouraging people to trust and follow Him. We can see how He meets people where they are, whatever their condition, and gives each individual good reason to follow Him. If anything holds us back from committing our lives fully to Jesus, these statements help to dispel our doubts and fears and draw us on to know Him better.

***The second purpose is to show how Jesus' life gives us an example that we can follow.*** Each of these 'I AM' statements is then linked to an incident in the narrative that illustrates what Jesus said, and shows us how we might follow His example in the way we live our Christian lives. It is by following His example that the quality of our lives will make a difference wherever God has placed us in society. We can '***become Jesus***' to the people around us.

The dates below are Sundays. The Home Groups meet on various days in the week following these Sundays.

September 12 <sup>th</sup>	John 4 vv 1-42 I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. <b><i>Jesus encourages faith, bringing hope to those enmeshed in sin.</i></b>
September 26 <sup>th</sup>	John 6 vv 1-59 I am the Bread of Life <b><i>Jesus brings compassion to bear, meeting material and spiritual need.</i></b>
October 10 <sup>th</sup>	John 9 vv 1-41 I am the Light of the World <b><i>Jesus brings sight and healing to those in darkness.</i></b>
October 24 <sup>th</sup> (Half Term week)	John 10 vv 1-42 I am the good shepherd. <b><i>Jesus sets the pattern of true leadership, demonstrating that He is worth following.</i></b>
November 7 <sup>th</sup>	John 11 vv 1-44 I am the Resurrection and the Life <b><i>Jesus confronts death and helps us deal with the realities of life and death.</i></b>
November 21 <sup>st</sup>	John 15 v 1-16 v 4 I am the true vine <b><i>Jesus shows the way to a fruitful and satisfying life through union with Himself.</i></b>
December 12 <sup>th</sup>	Currently left free.