**Intro to the Study:**

Have you ever known someone who sees the world a little bit differently than you? …who sees the world differently than most? Sometimes it’s an artist, or a philosopher, a musician or a poet, sometimes it’s a fisherman or the guy painting your house. A guy named Ray painted my house once and I’m telling you he was one of the most insightful, intelligent and deeply unique Christians I’ve ever met…

Whoever it is… philosopher or artist, fisherman or painter… these sort of people see the same world as everyone else… but the lens through which they view it… is not better or worse but unique, different, refreshing… they help us to see the same differently …to have our lives challenged a bit… to gain a new insight… to see a different perspective… to live more fully…

There are 4 gospel books in the New Testament. All 4 tell us the one true gospel, the one good news about Jesus. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John! Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the synoptic Gospels… because they together (syn) see (optic), synoptic, they see-together the life of Jesus. They see and depict his life in a similar way. John, on the other hand, he’s the philosopher, the artist, the painter, the fisherman… he helps us see a bit differently… it’s the same Jesus, the same Good News, the Same Gospel, just a different lens.

Part of this may be due to the historical circumstances surrounding John and when he wrote the Gospel. We know that John was one of the 12 disciples of Jesus. He was present at the foot of the cross, and he was one of the first to come to the empty tomb. He was with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them after He rose. John was part of the inner circle, Peter James and John. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved. Some of these factors may give a different flavor to his Gospel but when and where he wrote it may have too. Most scholars believe he wrote the Gospel later than Matthew Mark and Luke. Maybe even as late as 90AD. It is also possible that he wrote in Asia Minor, farther away from the Jerusalem. Some claim that the audience he wrote to were Jewish Christians as well as Greek and Samaritan Christians. So, some would have a deeper understanding of the Old Testament and some would not. Either way, John weaves his gospel together in a way that speaks to different audiences and different levels of maturity.

One commentator, Gary Baumler, once described the Gospel according to John this way… John *“is a shallow pool in which a child can wade; for even a child will come away with the message ‘Believe and live.’ At the same time, this gospel is an ocean full of wonders that the most eager explorer cannot fully fathom in a lifetime of searching.”*

I’m telling you… I’ve found that to be so true about the Gospel of John. There is a great simplicity to Jesus’ words…a shallow pool… yet at the same time his words invite a lifetime of reflection and pursuit of the eternal mysteries of Faith… of who God is and what that means for you, for us… … an ocean full of wonders...!

The purpose of John’s Gospel is simple… Believe and Have Life. John 20:31 states…**31***But these are written that you may* ***believe****that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by* ***believing*** *you may have* ***life*** *in his name.*

The purpose, the message is Simple: Believe and have Life. Believe and Live! But the more you think on that… the more that reality plays out in your life… the more you begin to move from the shallow kiddie pool to the deep end, to the ocean… and all its terrific depths of wonder!

You see the simple message of John… to believe and live is centered in Jesus. WE believe in Jesus. To believe in Jesus is to trust in Him, to have faith in him. Not merely an intellectual mastery of facts….but a trust relationship of dependence. To trust, to Depend on, to believe that he is who he says he is. He is the Messiah, the Christ, He is the Son of God! Jesus is God!

Now If you’ve been a Christian for any period of time… that’s not news to you. But imagine how controversial, how shocking, how RADICAL that CLAIM was 2000 years ago. It was so radical that some of the Jewish people picked up stones to kill him… That’s the modern equivalent of pulling out a gun and trying to shoot someone! Why did they attempt to kill him?

In John chapter 8 we see a dispute between Jesus and some of the Jewish people. An argument ensues about demon possession, the great and revered patriarch Abraham, and Jesus’ relationship to the Heavenly Father. Jesus speaks some profound words, some of the Jews challenge him and then In John 8 verse 58 it says. *“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born,****I AM****!”****59****At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.*

They were willing to kill Jesus because he said “before Abraham was born, I AM.” You see Jesus was claiming to exist before the great patriarch Abraham, the father of the people of Israel. All the way back in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God promised to Abraham to make him in to a great nation and God said to Abraham that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (gen 12.3). But what makes Jesus claim even more radical is those two little words… “I AM.” ….Who would’ve thought that two little words would cause such commotion, such controversy, such a thirst for blood and murder… “I AM”… You see when Jesus said “before Abraham was born, I AM.” … he was saying that he is God, that he is the Lord, that He is Yahweh, that he existed, as God, before the great patriarch Abraham. It was and is The radical claim that changes everything! It changes everything for the Jewish people, It changes everything for the Samaritans, It changes everything for the gentiles, It changes everything for all peoples, all of humanity past present and future!

You see back in the Old Testament… hundreds of years after the promise to Abraham… in the book of Exodus, Moses had an awesome fiery encounter with God himself. You may remember the incident of Moses and the burning bush… The Egyptians had enslaved the Israelites… and were oppressing them… even killing their children to control the population. As a baby, Moses was delivered from this infanticide (genocide?) by being put in a basket and floated down the river. Pharaoh’s daughter rescued him and he actually grew up in the Egyptian Pharaoh’s house. After he had grown up, he went out to his own people, saw their oppression and ended up enraged to the point of killing an Egyptian that was beating one of the Israelites. He fled to the desert and started a life of shepherding. He was tending the flock one day and encountered the burning bush. God spoke to him in the fiery bush. He said….

*“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” (exodus 3.6)… the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.****10****So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”*

Moses heard those words from God and was like… what? Me? “*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”* (Exodus 3:11).

It was like he was saying I’m just a shepherd, I’m just a fisherman, I just paint houses…

God said to Him… “*I will be with you*… (exodus 3:12).

Moses says… what if they ask me what your name is?

Now Listen to Exodus 3:14. We’re about to plunge ourselves into the deep-end here my friends…

***14GOD*** *said to Moses, “****I AM*** *who* ***I AM****. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘****I AM****has sent me to you.’”*

We could mine the depths of God and his name forever. …God continues in verse 15…

***15****God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The****LORD****, the God of your fathers—the God of* ***Abraham****, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’*

Whenever you see LORD in all capital letters in your English bibles. It is the same exact word that was just translated I AM. It is a translation of God’s name, YAHWEH!!! I AM, I WILL BE, HE IS… That is God’s name. In the Old Testament this name for God occurs almost 7,000 times… God continues in verse 15

*“This is my name forever,
 the name you shall call me
 from generation to generation.*

Hear Jesus’ words again from John 8, *before Abraham was born,****I AM****!*

The radical claim that changes everything.

23 times in the book of John, Jesus says “I AM.” Each time pointing to his divine status.

For the next 6 weeks we will be seeking to go deeper, from the wading pool toward the wonderful depths of the ocean... We will look at some of these radical claims of Jesus… on the one hand they are simple and on the other hand we could explore their depths for a life time… Jesus said…

“I AM the bread of life.” John 6:35

“I AM the light of the world.” John 8:12

“I AM the good shepherd.” John 10:14

“I AM the gate for the sheep.” John 10:7

“I AM the resurrection and the life.” John 11:25

“I AM the way and the truth and the life.” John 14:6

“I AM the vine.” John 15:5

Each of these radical claims say something about who Jesus is… He is I AM… He is God… HE IS, Yahweh! But it doesn’t stop there. Who he is directly impacts who you are…

By believing in Jesus… you have life…

A guy named Ray painted my house once and his depth of insight and belief reminded me of the sanctity of all human life and to never judge a book by its cover...

A guy named Moses tended to sheep in the desert… and Yahweh, the LORD, used him to deliver the people of God from slavery to life!

A guy named John was a fisherman… but Jesus, God himself, called him to be a fisher of men… and he wrote the fourth gospel so that all of humanity… you and me included… might believe and have life in Jesus’ Name.

Ray, Moses, John, you and I are all the same… We believe. We Live. Jesus says “I AM”… and Who Jesus is shapes who we are! I’m Looking forward to John leading us into fresh ways of seeing Jesus. In the weeks ahead, May the Holy Spirit lead us from the shallow water to the mysterious depths of faith in Jesus and Life in his name …