

**Small Group
Preparation and Discussion
Coram Deo- Love of the Father**

Goals of Coram Deo Study

- ❖ The Coram Deo Study has one main goal—to learn to live with God again. Three sub-goals act as supports. Think of a stool. Living with God is the top of the stool and the three truths below are the legs.
 - Learning about God from His own mouth.
 - Guarding ourselves and other from being ashamed of the gospel.
 - Be proud enough of God to defend Him intelligently in a skeptical culture.

Preparation

- ❖ The third lesson covers the love of God the Father. To prepare for this lesson please do the following:
 - Read the passage
 - Listen to the sermon on our website or SermonAudio while looking at the Bible study outline below. Take notes and figure out how you will guide the group to consider each aspect of sin.
 - Review the timeline below and determine how you want to tailor it to your group. The outline follows the order of events in each small group.

Welcome and Worship [5-10 minutes]

- ❖ Please review your fellowship manual for extensive details. Worship can be accomplished in many ways. You could read a Psalm. You could simply open with prayer. You could sing a hymn.
- ❖ Use your judgment. What kind of worship best sets the tone to connect people with the presence of God? Invoke Him into your midst.
- ❖ Possible Resources
 - Valley of Vision
 - Hymnal
 - The Psalms

Bible Study [15-30 minutes]

Below you will find the outline from the Coram Deo: Love of the Father sermon with questions. Remember, you are not holding a seminary class. You are seeking to bring attention to a few aspects of God's holiness. The application is included, but don't focus on that yet. The sharing time is the best place to explore the implications.

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Passage:

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”” (John 3:1–21, NKJV)

Introduction

Jonathan Edwards: Thought project- enmity

Topic

[Naturally, humans are blind to the love of the Father]

Division

Blindness; Blindness to Heaven; Blindness to Love

Blindness

- I. Humanity is blind
 - A. Verse 3: “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
 1. Blindness of eyes is not literal
 2. Speaking of spiritual death
 - a. The internal disposition of humanity will be inclined toward all evil and blind to good unless graciously restrained.
 - 1) ²⁶Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

- 2) Usually, thought of in terms of evil deeds.
- b. However, the spiritual death blinds the mind from seeing certain things.
 - 1) Using active electrolocation, an animal emits a weak electric field, allowing it to sense the presence of nearby objects without actually touching them. It works in the following way: if you have a fish in a fluid, let's say fresh water, that fluid has a certain electrical resistance to it. If you put an object in that fluid with a different resistance, like another animal, it creates a distortion in the water's electrical properties. The fish's active electrosensory system detects this distortion. This ability does not extend more than a body length away, but it's very effective in that short range.
 - 2) We know that sea turtles are able to pick up both the direction and intensity of the earth's magnetic field. If you chart these two factors across the globe, in certain places you actually get a very nice bi-coordinate map – like longitude and latitude but in terms of the intensity and direction of the magnetic field. We have determined that they're able to navigate by these fields. We don't know exactly how, but we know that if we put them in a tank with big magnets, we can confuse them in predictable ways.
- B. E.g. of losing electro or magnetic location (so to speak)
 1. E.g. 2:23ff
 2. Nicodemus another example of this
 - a. 'man' thread
 - b. contradicts him

[Not a blindness to the magnetic field of the earth, but the realities of heaven]

Blindness to Heaven

- I. We are blind to heaven.
 - A. Verse 6: That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit
 1. Earthly beings know and see and are acclimatized to earthly solutions and practices.
 2. Heavenly beings know and see and are acclimatized to heavenly solutions and practices
 - a. ¹⁵ And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"
 - b. ¹⁶ So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who *are* with us *are* more than those who *are* with them." ¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, and

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said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

- c. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."
- II. In particular, they can't see Jesus
- A. They see His signs, but not the true signification.
 - B. They see "God is with you"
 1. "Making Jerusalem Great Again"
 2. Conviction book
 - a. Marcus J. Borg
 - b. Jesus did not resurrect and did not atone for sins
 - 1) Jesus is a much needed social radical to subvert domination systems and release the oppressed.
 - C. Jesus defies earthly categories
 1. Verse 12
 2. Verse 13, He is the Son of Man from Heaven
 - a. Not made of human hands (Daniel)
 - 1) Incarnation, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin, Mary.
 - 2)
 3. Son of Man (Messiah)
 - a. To usher in the Kingdom (rule and reign) of God
 4. Verse 14:
 - a. Must be lifted up (crucifixion) to keep his people from perishing

Blindness to Love

- I. If you miss or can't see the above, then you miss the extraordinary character of the love of the Father.
 - A. Situation on earth is so bad, only heaven can help.
 1. Can't solve through earthly politics and education and medicine.
 - B. Our sin is so bad, that we can't fix it ourselves
- II. But, we don't believe that our sin is that bad.
 - A. It was so horrific that it could only be solved by God's only begotten Son being crucified.
 1. Abraham and Isaac.
- III. But, humans are blind to this and therefore, when asked about God they don't see the truth of John 3:16
 - A. "For God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son."
 - B. 1 John 4:9⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.
- IV. Been a problem for some time!
 - A. ¹⁰ Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. ¹¹ And

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when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

- B. ¹² When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

V. Application

- A. When you feel misery, what are your thoughts about God, the Father?

1. He doesn't see me.
2. On vacation.
3. Incompetent
4. Doesn't know how to love.

Conclusion

1. Blindness, Blindness to Heaven, Blindness to Love
2. Non-Christian
 - a. John and Jesus diagnose your problem as one of Spiritual blindness which keeps you from seeing the truth about Jesus and therefore the love of God the Father. Would you please consider the love of the Father?
 - i. Funeral-
 1. Possible death of child
 2. God doesn't love, therefore I hate.
 3. But what about John 3:16-
 - a. “The pain burns...still”
 - b. “But, not as simple as I thought, because of the cross.”
3. Christian
 - a. Temptation at every moment to lose faith in the Love of the Father
 - i. Consider the cross again
 1. Cross a means for the father to give you all things through Christ.
 2. You always see Christ as a treasury but you fail to see that He is filled by the Father.
 - b. Some of you are struggling deeply with this.
 - i. Hunting property
 - ii. Old trash sites- old rusted cans
 - iii. Your faith in God's love
 1. Makes sense of Using your Scriptures and meditation
 2. Consider the faith of others, consider the sacrifices and wisdom that God the father unfolds in love.
 - c. Greatest tragedy of blindness of love
 - i. Is you don't love him back
 - ii. Did you know God wants you to love Him
 1. Love the Lord your God...
 - iii. He wants you to look at His love for you and to enjoy Him and in return be thrilled about Him and express yourself in love toward Him.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,

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And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

Sharing [15-30 Minutes]

1. Do you have experience with metaphorical blindness?
2. What are some examples of being blind to Spiritual or heavenly realities?
3. What are some ways that people are blind to the reality of Jesus?
4. Who is Jesus?
5. How does a true view of Jesus help you to understand the true nature of the Father?
6. Does the Father seem cruel to you?
7. Does the Father all powerful but uncaring?
8. When things go wrong, what are some lies that you believe about God the Father?
9. How can remembering the true heavenly nature of the Son correct those lies about the Father?
10. Can you sing the final song with an honest heart? Why or why not?
11. How have you learned about God's love?

Prayer Time [5-10 minutes]

Remember, all kinds of prayer requests may be taken, but keep a good balance. Make sure the emphasis falls on prayer for discovered needs relative to the Love of the Father. Are people doubting the Father's love? Pray for them! Are they unsure about why Jesus is necessary? Pray! Do they want to trust God, but find it very difficult? Pray!

Socialize [Up to you]

This is a time to be intentional in your relationships. God has placed you in a leadership position of some sort. Take it seriously!