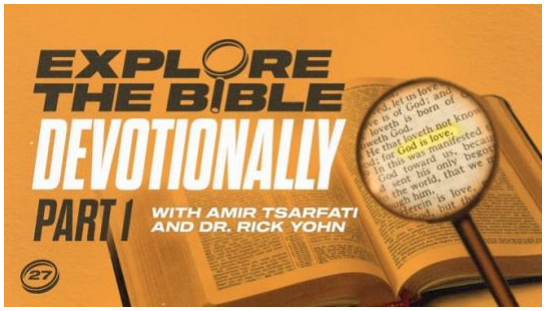
Amir Tsarfati
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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbyJ_JLOht0
Devotionally (Part 1)



AMIR: Hey, Shalom everyone, I'm Amir Tsarfati from CONNECT here in the Jezreel Valley in Galilee, Israel. And this is one more *Explore the Bible* chapter with Dr. Rick Yohn. Shalom, Dr. Rick, how are you, my friend?

RICK: I am doing real well. What a great opportunity we have today. I can't wait to get into the Gospel of John.

AMIR: Amen, yes, exactly. In fact, not long ago, you and I were on the Alaskan cruise and it seems like, oh, a lot of fun. But the funny thing is that I think you're carrying a camera that is bigger than you. [Laughter] I mean, it's a gigantic zoom. Anyway, you took some beautiful photos, and I think our followers and viewers can watch now and see some of the beauty that we encountered as we traveled through God's magnificent creation. So thank you for being part of that. And you were there not just to behold the beauty of God's creation, but also you were there available to talk to people, answer questions and...

RICK: Amir, I just love that, especially getting to know a number of our viewers and they were just so excited about these podcasts that we are doing. And to know that the podcasts are really helping people explore the Bible for themselves. That just thrilled me and causes me to want to do more of these and dig deeper into the Scriptures to help people to know what to look for when you are exploring the Bible.

AMIR: Exactly, and the last time we explored the Bible together, we were dwelling on the book of Psalms. What is it that you have for us today?

RICK: Well, I like to help people explore the Bible devotionally. Now, usually when you think of devotionally, this is what people normally do. But the problem is that before people apply Scripture to life, they need to go through a couple of other steps. And we want people to be able to read the Scriptures and go from the mind to the heart. That's devotional. This is what the Bible says, this is what it means, now this is what it means to me; this is what God wants me to do with what He has just shown me. So first of all...

AMIR: I guess most of the Bible reading of an individual is actually this type of Bible reading, devotional. Because, I mean, you can choose to study the Bible in a class or in a course, or whatever, or when you prepare a message. But for the most part, your Bible reading, the daily Bible reading, hopefully you are doing that, is a devotional manner, and that's what we're talking about today.

RICK: Definitely, but again, before we apply the Bible to our lives, we have to know what it really says. And so that's why we go through the observation, interpretation, correlation, and then application. First, we have to find out what are we looking at, what do I see as I am reading, and am I really looking for specific things in the Bible? Am I looking for these connecting words? Am I looking for these words that are being used over and over again in the same passage? Am I looking at the cause and effect relationships? And as we get into the Gospel of John, we're going to see all of this, and then we can ask, alright, what does this mean to me? I mean, when you think of the passage of Scripture that's so often applied before it's interpreted is in Jeremiah 29: [AMIR: True.] "I know the plans I have for you,..." people don't realize that when you really understand what He is saying, it is actually a letter that he is writing from Jerusalem to the people in Babylon! And God is saying to those captives in Babylon, "I have a plan for you, not to harm you, but to

prosper you." And then once we understand that, yeah, then we can take that same principle into our own lives.

AMIR: Yeah. I agree with you, especially those verses from Jeremiah 29, they're often taken by so many people to women's conferences and stuff like that, and they fail to understand the context in which it was written, to whom it was written. And of course, of course, when it comes to the nature and character of God, we can always apply to ourselves even today. [RICK: Amen.] But let's first ask who was it written for and when and how, and that will reveal to you even extra measure of God's faithfulness. Because if that's what He said to the people whom He just kicked out of the land for 70 years, can you imagine how faithful He is to us also when we stumble and fall as well? And so it is beautiful. Now, as always, when we talk about a certain aspect of Bible reading and Bible study, we are choosing a specific portion of Scripture to demonstrate it. So, I think today it's the Gospel of John chapter 1.

RICK: Yes, definitely. And Amir, why don't you read the first number of verses, and then first 13 verses, and then I will read from there. We're not going to go through the entire Gospel of John today. We just don't have the time.

AMIR: OK, I will. **"[1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. [4] In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. [5] And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. [6] There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. [7] This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. [8] He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. [9] That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. [10] He was in the world, and the world was made through Him,**

and the world did not know Him. [11] He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. [12] But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: [13] who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:1-13)

RICK: "[14] The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. [15] (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, 'This is the one I spoke about when I said, "He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me."') [16] Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. [17] For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. [18] No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known." (John 1:14-18 NIV) Wow, powerful words.

AMIR: Yeah, indeed. Often times I think people recommend new believers when they want to read the New Testament actually to start with John rather than with Matthew, and there is obviously a reason for that. But let's go back to the fact that you mentioned that we are now talking about how to read the Bible devotionally. Now, what is the difference between reading it devotionally? Is there any difference between reading it devotionally and reading it any other way? I mean, define the difference.

RICK: Yeah, it's getting the Word from the mind to the heart. "This is what the Bible is saying, but what does that mean for me?" And any place in the Scriptures, we just have to ask, "Lord, what are you telling me? What do you want me to know?" And one of the things I have found is asking the Lord constantly, "Open my eyes and my heart that as I read this passage of Scripture I might hear Your voice; I might understand what You are telling me in my situation today." But I

also want to know what was going on in the days of John. What is he talking about? Why did he write what he wrote? How is this different from the other Gospels? And boy, John is different from the other Gospels even just from the very first verse. I mean, when you think of Matthew and Luke basically are starting with the birth of Christ, and Mark gets right into His ministry, we find John, he goes back into eternity past, "In the beginning" —that's a lot different than the other Gospels. He's taken us before time, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." And in the Greek text it says, "And God was the Word." I mean, really emphasizing the fact that God was the Word. So reading devotionally is just asking the Lord, "As I read this and ask questions and that, I want to know what are you telling me, Lord? What principle is there in here that I can apply to my life?"

AMIR: I agree. And so when we go through that, how and why does the Apostle John differ from any other Gospel? I mean, why did you choose to go to John necessarily?

RICK: Well, basically because the Gospel of John, beginning from eternity past, he is letting us know who this Jesus is. When you look at the other Gospels, and they talk about His birth and that, you go through a couple of chapters and then you find out who this Jesus is. With John, it's this Jesus is God, He is equal with God. Just as He says in John 10:30, "I and My Father are..." [AMIR: Yeah.] …Yeah…in the Gospel of John where He's saying, "I and My Father are one" [and later in John 14:9], "… He who has seen Me has seen the Father." So the Gospel of John again and again shows us that Jesus is God.

AMIR: Yeah, absolutely. And by the way, that's the one thing both Muslims and Jews are attacking believers in Yeshua for claiming that He is God. But we're not claiming He is God, He claimed to be God… [RICK: That's right…] and He demonstrated it as well. It wasn't even just words. I mean, and that's the thing about the greatness of what we believe in. And it's interesting

because I think if you really think about it, one of the main ways for Yeshua to manifest His deity is "No one takes My life from Me. I lay down My life, and I can take it back." And that's exactly what He did. He laid down His life and He also took it back, which is the attribute that God alone has. No one can give life, no one can take life but God. But at the same time, our faith, as we know, is worth nothing if it's not for the fact that He is resurrected, that we believe in the living Messiah. So everything that we believe in requires Him to be God. Otherwise, what He said, who He is, and where He is, renders no meaning and no significance. So yeah, you talked earlier about contrasts also. Contrast, what do you see as the major contrast in this passage that we just read?

RICK: You know, when I opened the Scriptures, I just asked the Lord, "Show me something I haven't seen before." And I mean, I've taught this passage numerous times. And as I opened the Gospel of John and I started reading, the contrasts are amazing. I mean **"[4] In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. [5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:4-5 NIV).** I mean, it's like when you go to your refrigerator and you open the refrigerator's door, the darkness... if you go into a dark room and open a dark kitchen and you open up the refrigerator, the darkness doesn't extinguish the light. The light from the refrigerator lightens the darkness. And when you think of the darkness in this world, always trying to extinguish truth, I mean, when you think of what we are experiencing today, in all aspects of life, there's so much spiritual darkness. And that's why people don't want to hear truth. They're not searching for truth; they don't want to hear truth; they try to extinguish truth, but truth penetrates into the darkness. So you have that distinction.

AMIR: Yeah, I think maybe we should continue reading because there's more that we want to take a look at. [RICK: Okay.] I'll go on from verse 19 to 28. So it goes like that. **(John 1:19-28) "[19] Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem**

to ask him, 'Who are you? '[20] He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ. '[21] And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah? 'He said, "I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet? 'And he answered, 'No. '[22] Then they said to him, 'Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself? '[23] He said: 'I am "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the LORD,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.'" [24] Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. [25] And they asked him, saying, 'Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet? '[26] John answered them, saying, 'I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. [27] It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. '[28] These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing."

Well, quite revealing, and I think about that... You know, I'm always amazed at how authentic, but also genuine Scriptures are. You can clearly see people who are religious in nature—they think they know God; they think they worship God; they think they know the way—but you can tell that they are so curious and anxious to know. They understood something big is going on, "We need to understand what is it all about." And I find it fascinating. I mean, and I find the fact that the Bible gives us... I mean, the Bible could have been... I mean, this portion could have been written in a way that there is no question, there is no doubt, there is nothing and it's all... But you can clearly see the honesty that is being displayed here. And I find it quite amazing how they gave him only three options. I mean, are you the Messiah, are you Elijah, or are you the Prophet? [Laughter] If you're not one of these three, what are we doing here? So it's amazing.

RICK: Yeah, Amir, why do you think they're asking those questions? Why these three?

AMIR: Well, it's very interesting because first of all, every believing Jew is anticipating the coming of the Messiah up until today by the way. In every gathering of religious Jews, they sing and talk and wait and they say, "I believe in the coming of the Messiah, and even if He tarries, I will wait for Him until He comes." So the anticipation for the coming of the Messiah has been there for the longest time. But then, of course, you have Malachi 4:5, where there is the promise that Elijah would come before the great day of the Lord. And then there is Deuteronomy 18, verses 15 to 18, which Moses referred to a prophet like him that will have to come. So in their mind, the Bible itself speaks of another prophet. The Bible itself speaks of Elijah that has to come back again in a way. And that's why, by the way, we have a cup of wine and an open door every Passover seder next to an empty chair, hoping that He will come back. And so these are not random things. These are things that are backed by Scriptures. And for them, they were a matter of future because Messiah hasn't come yet, no one in the spirit of Elijah has arrived yet, they haven't seen yet the great prophet that Moses talked about yet. So they understand, we see amazing things. There was a feeling in the first century of the climax of the Messianic expectations. Everybody... Think about it, when you're oppressed and ruled by a pagan rule of an empire that does not share your values, your anticipation for His coming is even greater. And your longing for Him to come and release you and redeem you, not from your sins, but from the Romans, is even greater.

So, these are the reasons why the Levites and the priests were dealing—and the Pharisees also—they're dealing with these questions. And they saw John the Baptist is someone very different, they have never seen anyone like that. They've seen how many people are flocking to the Jordan River to be baptized, and they just couldn't understand who in the world are you? And he answered them and he answered them also with an answer that is backed by his Scriptures. And that is, of course, Isaiah 40, verse 3, where he said: **"I am 'The voice of one crying in the**

wilderness: Make straight the way of the LORD,'" (John 1:23) So both are, in a way, quoting verses, or by the way of asking and his answer, they're exchanging "biblical" prophetic ideas. [RICK: Laughter. That's right.] Yeah. But John said, "The thing is this, there is One among you who is the One, and you don't know Him." Isn't that amazing? [RICK: Very definitely.]" You don't know Him." Yeah.

RICK: And today we have the same thing with people wondering... I mean, when they have heard people like Charlie Kirk, and people who don't know the Lord at all wanted to hear what he was saying. And because he did not line up with their own viewpoints, their whole response is, "Well, he is wrong. And he is just… he is the one who is that we need to deal with, get rid of." Because darkness doesn't like truth. And the darkness of these Pharisees and these scribes, they did not realize how spiritually dark they were, and how far they were from the living God. And though they were interested in what John was doing, once they realized what he was doing, then they wanted to get rid of John too, as well as the Lord Jesus Christ.

AMIR: Exactly.

RICK: So, as we keep on looking at this, we find that John continues to testify about Jesus with his disciples. **"[29] The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! [30] This is the one I meant when I said, "A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me." [31] I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel. '[32] Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. [33] And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit." [34] I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One.'"**

(John 1:29-34 NIV) Now, when you think that Jesus and John were cousins, what does he mean, "I didn't know Him"? I mean, you read that, and he says, "I didn't know Him." What's he talking about?

AMIR: Well, obviously, he didn't know Him as the Messiah…

RICK: Exactly.

AMIR: He was His relative. That's all he knew about Him.

RICK: Yeah.

AMIR: He didn't know Him, but he confessed... But then he confessed. I mean, that's the beauty about John. John was sent by God to be a voice calling in the wilderness and by doing so, he confessed, **"[29] ... Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (verse 29 NKJV)** In other words, John realized that the One that is coming is not just a prophet, it's not just for Israel, it's not just about correct your way, or do this, or do that. This is a revolutionary thing, and it's about the whole world. And you have to understand, the Jewish people, this is a revolutionary thing for them. All they talk about until that point is when... remember, even the disciples, the first thing before Jesus went back to the Father, they said, "When will the kingdom be restored back to Israel?" They always talked about Israel, and when will Israel be back, and when will God do this with us? And it's all about the nation of Israel, and the people of Israel, and the God of Israel. And suddenly, John is throwing in the air something so big and so explosive. First of all, yes, He comes from the Jewish lineage and yes, He is that which is the Passover Lamb. He's also resembling the daily sacrifices. He's also the suffering servant of the Lord from Isaiah chapter 53. He's also, they had in mind Abraham's sacrifice also. Remember, Abraham said God will provide for Himself a lamb in Genesis 22. So when John said all of those things, it bore so much more meaning to a Jewish ear with all the promises that are there, and all the prophetic things

that He has to fulfill in His coming. And again, if you really think about it, in Passover, and the daily sacrifices in the temple, and even in Isaiah 53, it was for the most part speaking about Israel. I mean, Passover, you know, think about even the sacrifice on Yom Kippur—it's about the people of Israel. But if you think about Abraham, and God will provide a lamb for Himself, you understand it's bigger. And I think...

RICK: And at the same location. At the same location.

AMIR: Absolutely. Yeah, it's beautiful.

RICK: Mount Moriah.

AMIR: Yeah. It's beautiful, it's amazing and I think that... I wish I could press a button and shoot myself back to the first century and... just to see with all that we know now, just to see how everybody is reacting to the appearance of Jesus. And remember, these people, they never hated Him. In the beginning, they were actually super curious and open because they needed to know What's going on here. Only when the leadership was threatened by Him, then actions were taken to somehow remove Him. But the people were very much excited and in tune for Messiah. But as I often tell people, the problem of the Jewish people was never that they rejected Jesus as Messiah, it's that they never understood what Messiah is all about and therefore, their problem with Him was the blasphemy of Him equating Himself to God, with God. And that's because they never understood who Messiah and what Messiah is all about. It's not about redemption from the Romans.

RICK: They did not understand Isaiah 53.

AMIR: Absolutely, Isaiah 53, which is, by the way, the chapter that led me to the Lord personally because that was the big revelation for me at the time I almost took my life. It's the fact that His death, His suffering, if all of that was for me, this was necessary, it was God's way to save me.

And I did not need someone to save me from the foster family. I needed someone to save me from me. I needed salvation, not from the things around me, but the things that are in me. And when He came and offered them forgiveness of sins, that's not what they were waiting for. "For that we have Yom Kippur." "For that we have this, for that we have that." "What we want is a king. We want the kingdom to be restored to Israel." And it wasn't a time yet.

RICK: What a contrast in verse 17, **"[17] For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17, NIV)**

AMIR: Yes, amen, amen.

RICK: Grace...

AMIR: Okay, Dr. Rick, yeah, we've come to the end of this part of our program today. Next time we will continue right from this point. We're still going to talk about John chapter 1 and we're still going to explore how to study, explore the Bible devotionally. I want to remind people to go to our website and they can find there more about our program today. And also they can leave a question for you if they want to ask something regarding the program today. Thank you, Dr. Rick, for joining me today for *Explore the Bible* and I can't wait for our next one in a few weeks. God bless you and God bless everyone that are watching. Please share it with as many people as you can. Thank you and God bless you from Galilee and from Denver, Colorado.

* Scripture is taken from the New King James Version unless noted otherwise.

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