

Jesus' claims floors us. The "I AM" breaks right through into our lives!

"If you have seen me, you have seen the Father". This perhaps is one of the most outstanding claims Jesus gives to us. His words and actions show us who the Father is. In this study, you will have the opportunity to discover the very claims of Jesus that portrays the Father. It is an adventure you will never regret as you will come close to the very words and actions of God himself. By them you would discover the way to living your life to the fullest. Come and discover Jesus.



FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL STUDENTS, MALAYSIA

Working amongst youth of college and university-going age, FES has many years of experience and many stories of young people who have grown and matured in the Lord. This series is just an extension of our ministry to encourage the encounter of God through the Word.

BREAKTHROUGH

SMALL GROUP SERIES

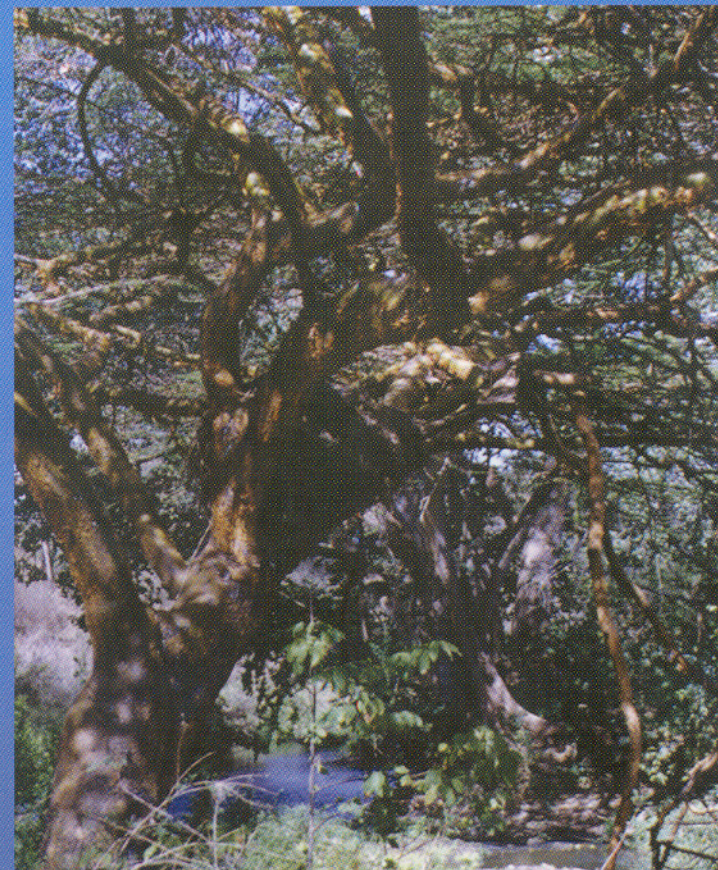
6 in the series for Individuals or Groups

"BREAKTHROUGH" based mainly on the Gospel of John, reveals Jesus at his most radical, bringing timely breakthroughs into lives and situations. In each encounter, he seems to scratch where people itch, revealing to them that God does not remain at a distance. Here we meet Jesus making outrageous claims about himself, though they do not seem so outrageous on closer examination. His life when it seemed to come to an end, merely signified a new beginning. He left behind a legacy of new hope and light for us to journey on, unravelling a new way to live!

1. Not From A Distance
2. Scratching Where It Itches
3. I AM 4 U
4. The End Or The Beginning?!
5. Light For The Journey
6. A Whole New World

ISBN 983-2393-02-7

I AM 4 YOU



BREAKTHROUGH

SMALL GROUP SERIES



RESOURCES

I AM 4 U

By :



Fellowship of Evangelical Students, Malaysia

6 studies for Individuals or Groups

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The Journey ~ "BREAKTHROUGH"

You must be wondering by now, why this series is called the "Breakthrough series" and what "Breakthrough" is all about. Well, "Breakthrough" is nothing more than our journey with the students in trying to bring the "euangelion" or Good News to our friends.

Challenges Open Doors To "BREAKTHROUGH"

We were stuck!

"What does FRIENDSHIP evangelism look like in real life? After friendships, what next? After sharing the Gospel outline, what next? How does one ease in to share the Gospel with a friend? It seems like nothing is happening!"

These were often heard complaints amongst the students we minister to. It began with the challenge of helping our students evangelise through friendships and making it intentional. What seemed a challenge then, opened doors to this "Breakthrough"! Hearing what our friends in the UK were doing gave us ideas to start our own.

Reaching Out Through Enriching Friendships

We did not want to treat people as targets, but rather persons whom God is interested in. Genuine, enriching friendships is one way we can "build highways" for the Lord to breakthrough into people's lives.

Thus, "Breakthrough" is a holistic endeavor focusing on FRIENDSHIPS, bearing the VOICE of the Gospel wherever God places us, and in sharing the MESSAGE of Jesus (through the gift copies of the Gospel of John). This also means that we are not in a hurry with our friends but are willing vessels in this process.

What Have We Here?

The "Breakthrough series" are Bible study guides intended as companions to the gift of the Gospel of John. Having given the gift, we hope to pray for opportunities for our friends to "investigate" this Jesus.

Our vision and prayer is that the guides become vehicles in order that

- ☞ you may behold the Lamb of God!
- ☞ you may see and believe!

The TEAM That Journeyed On

Yes, the team has journeyed on. We first mooted the idea in FES (*Fellowship of Evangelical Students*) in late 1999. When we felt that this was the way the Lord was leading us, we started work on getting the copyrights, working out campus strategies, writing the Bible study guides, etc. This has taken us more than one year in "brewing the stew"! We thank God for good partnership with both the UK and Malaysian Bible Societies. More than that, we thank God for each other in the FES team who have worked tirelessly just to see others given the opportunity to encounter the Word of life! The greatest glory and thanks goes to our very God Himself who moved mountains for us and brought in much needed resources.

"Breakthrough" - JOHN'S Gospel

1. Printing the John's Gospels in Malaysia - Mary Vergis
2. Anglicised Contemporary English Version of John - UK Bible Society
3. Malaysian Copyright Holder - Malaysian Bible Society

"Breakthrough" - Bible Study Series

1. Team of Writers - Annette Arulrajah, Audra Darshini, Chan Yoke Yee, Dan Fong Shin, Evelyn Wong, Kong Lee Ang, Loh Kim Cheng, Michael William
2. Layout for Guides - Dan Fong Shin & Evelyn Wong
3. Series Editors - Annette Arulrajah & Loh Kim Cheng
4. Proof Readers - Elisa Dass & Chan Yoke Yee

Bringing "Breakthrough" To The Campuses

1. Paper on Sharing The Idea With Leaders - Loh Kim Cheng
2. Campus Strategies - Annette, Darshini, Fong Shin, Evelyn, Lee Ang, Kim Cheng, Michael
3. Publicity Handbills - Paula Wong & Kevin Thomas (SU)
4. Preparation of Training Modules - Annette, Darshini, Yoke Yee

* All names mentioned above are fulltime FES staff during the period of our production.

Foreword

One never knows what the e-mail may bring - a delightful surprise or more work! A polite message from FES Malaysia was both. "Before you come to Malaysia in August would it be possible for you to pre-edit a series of Bible studies we have written?"

I knew it would take many hours and much effort if it were to be helpful to the writers. But I didn't even pray about it. I knew it was the right thing to do. It has been the passion of my life to encourage young student workers anywhere in the world to make Bible studies the foundation of their evangelistic and discipling ministry.

It's g-r-e-a-t when these young workers can train their students in Bible studies. I think it's even greater when churches ask them for help in this same area. Over the decades from country to country I have seen churches revitalized or planted by graduates who learned to take the Bible seriously when they were students.

Last month I was in Poland for training university students in evangelistic Bible studies. The president of a fast-growing biblical seminary asked if I could do the same course for his theology students. It was a privilege. But what equally delighted me was to discover that we had met some 23 years ago when he was a student. "It was in that inductive Bible study course (at a European leadership conference) where I first learned to study the Bible. I didn't know it could be so exciting. That excitement for God's Word keeps growing. I want our students to know the same excitement so they can pass it on."

At our church this morning I started a new class. I dared to call it "In-depth Gospel Studies", because I think that our church is typical. People sincerely believe Jesus but know him only in bits and pieces. At best they have an album of popular Jesus photos. They need to see the down-to-earth Jesus as in a video, a moving drama. With that title I didn't know if anybody would come. To my surprise they kept coming and coming. What hunger these longtime Christians expressed! One of them, a lawyer, expressed it as "I want to know God more deeply, not just have a good feeling when I'm singing praise songs with others." At the end of the study in Luke 1, Tony asked if he could bring his not-yet-Christian girlfriend next week, because "I think she will dig this kind of study."

That's what the Bible studies in this series are about - scratching people where they're itching. When I did get to Kuala Lumpur last August I sat down with the writers for oral editing. It was a pleasure to work with them. They were highly teachable. And industrious. The sessions were fruitful. After that they re-worked their studies and helped each other in further editing.

Nothing pleases me more than to commend these Bible studies for your individual or group use on campuses, in homes, in workplaces, and in Sunday classes. If Bible studies are authentic (objective yet warmly personal), anybody - - Christian or seeker - - will benefit. For each study takes the biblical text seriously in helping people to see what it really says (not what they have pre-concluded); to think carefully about its meaning and to consider honestly its practical implications.

May this labor of love for our Lord and His church bring fruit, much fruit.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Ada Lum
Honolulu, Hawaii
January, 2001*

Introduction

"I AM 4 U" is about Jesus' radical statements. Radical because the phrase 'I AM' is understood by the Jews as how God names Himself. For the Jews these claims were blasphemous as no man can claim to be God.

In all, Jesus made seven "I AM" claims for himself. You will see how he explains each of these claims through his encounters with people on different occasions. In some encounters he backed up these claims with extraordinary acts or miracles. In some he uses metaphors that the Jewish people understood perfectly.

Through each of them, Jesus offers what is essential for life, all of which only he alone can give. He wants his hearers to live life to the fullest; he wants them to have life evermore.

Jesus also offers us these same radical essentials for life everlasting. In this study, let us encounter Jesus' claims and see how it can change and transform our own lives.

Using The Guide



Want to immerse yourself in the Word of God?



Want to leave the door open for SERENDIPITY (personal discovery) to take place?



*The Breakthrough Bible study guides are for you then!
Using the inductive approach, the process of O-I-A gives
you the opportunity for such happy encounters.*

O for Observation

To look at the text and pick up the facts (both obvious and hidden), searching for details. Asking questions of the text helps us see more facts.

I for Interpretation

To discover the implications and meanings of the facts, particularly to the original writer or hearers of the Bible. Knowing the background and context will sharpen the interpretation process.

A for Application

To find the meaning for us today, and see how we can put it to practice in our lives. We apply truth and principles that are timeless and universal.

Our format ...

This approach comes alive in our format and the phases we take you through.

Getting Started draws you into the study. Be free to share but do not spend too much time on this.

Come and See gets you to observe the text and see its implications. We have included background information which can help you see the context and understand the meaning of the passage.

What About You - A Breakthrough? helps toward making the study personal to your life. This is the most important part of the study, so please do not skip it.

ENJOY!

Study One

I AM the Bread of Life

John 6:22-69

Getting Started

- 1 Do you "live to eat or eat to live"? Please explain.

We need to see in order to believe. Therefore we tend to carry out a lot of activities to make our life full, hoping to experience a full life. Yet at the end of the day, most of the time, life still feels a bit empty. Jesus in this study offers us a life that is rich and everlasting. The way he points to seems to offer so much more.

Come and See

- 2 Jesus has just fed more than 5000 people with two fish and five loaves of bread (6:1-13). People naturally want to make him king (v.18). They want him to satisfy their physical needs. How does Jesus correct their wrong thinking about himself (vv. 26-27)?

③ If Jesus did not come to satisfy their temporal physical needs why did he perform that miracle? What response does he hope to get from the people (v. 28)?

④ The people ask for a miracle in order that they might put their trust in Jesus. Jesus replies that he is the bread of life (v. 35). What bread does he offer to the people (vv.35-37; 48-51)?

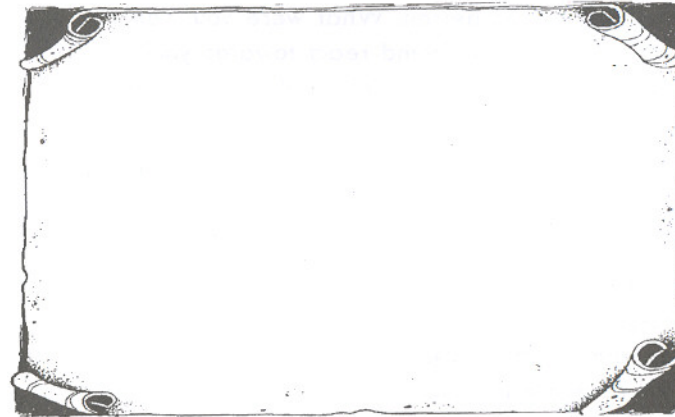
⑤ "Eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood"(vv. 53-56) seems to be a cannibalistic way of obtaining eternal life. In your opinion, what does eating and drinking mean here? (vv. 40, 47, 66)

What about you - a breakthrough?

⑥ Jesus puts his finger on the problem of most people. They work for temporary earthly goals. Consider your present activities and lifestyle. In what way do they have temporary, earthly values?

⑦ Making a decision to trust Jesus for eternal life is not a light matter. Many disciples left Jesus because of what he said. What are some of your difficulties in trusting him for eternal life?

⑧ To end this study, write a short prayer to God, asking him to help you with any doubts you may have in trusting Jesus as your bread of life.



Study Two

I AM the Light of the World

John 3:16-21; 8:12

Getting Started

- ① Share a time when you were confronted for doing something wrong towards another person. What were your feelings when confronted? How did your friend react towards you?

Everything in life can evoke two kinds of responses, an open response or a closed and bitter one. Similarly too when we consider the theme of darkness. Either people are afraid for various reasons or they like the cover of darkness. Jesus too had two kinds of responses from people. They either adored him or hated him. Jesus seems to hit the nail on its head as to why people have such a dual response to him.

Come and See

- ② Many things that happen often cause people to think God is not concerned with the world. John conveys an exact opposite picture of God's heart (3:16-18a). What does this reveal to us about God's view of mankind?

- ③ Gifts are either received well or rejected, depending on the receiver. Grace is defined as receiving something we do not deserve. God has given his Son to us as an undeserved gift for all mankind. What seems to be the consequences of accepting or refusing this gift (vv.16-18)?

- ④ Judgment usually comes only when a wrong has been committed. What seems to be the reason for people rejecting God's great sacrificial gift (vv.19-20)?

- ⑤ In John 8:12, Jesus claims to be the light of the world. How does he fulfill this role in the world, based on 3:19-21?

- ⑥ Verse 21 states that we can come to the light by living by the truth. What does 'living by the truth' mean to you?

Notes

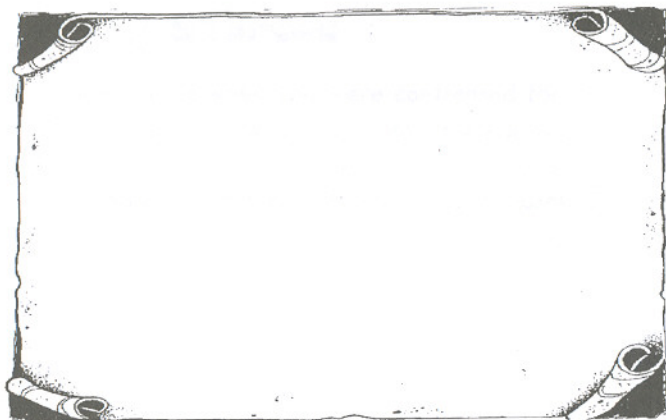
Vv. 16-18: The bible teaches us that all men have wronged God and fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23) and that the payment is death. Therefore men need to be saved from this punishment.

"Light": (1) kind of natural radiation to make things visible;
(2) understanding and enlightenment.

What about you - a breakthrough?

7 Looking at your own life, what are some things you have been hiding from the light? From the passage above, what confidence do you have in coming before God with your fears?

8 Write a prayer to God, asking him to bring you to the light.



9 James 5:16 reads: "If you have sinned you should tell each other what you have done. Then you can pray for one another and be healed". Find another person in your group and try telling each other some things you have been hiding from others. Then pray for each other.

Study Three

I AM the Gate and the Good Shepherd

John 10:1-21

Getting Started

1 If you were deciding who becomes the Prime Minister of Malaysia, what qualities would like to see in this person? Do you see these qualities in the present leadership of our country?

All over the world, many people have become skeptical of their leaders. These are leaders who seem to think only about themselves. Often times, they have let down and failed the people by giving in to corrupt and immoral ways.

People are tired of false promises, yet hungry for a truly caring leader. Jesus now claims to be the Good Shepherd and the Gate through which the sheep must enter. This calls for us to come under his leadership and direction. Can he be trusted?!! Who is to say that he won't turn out like the others?

Come and See

2 Shepherds are shown as leaders in the bible. The picture of the shepherd in John 10:1-6 is a very different one in terms of leadership. What distinguishes a shepherd from any other person?

③ In our normal election process, many promises are made by the candidates in order to be elected. Whether they keep their promises or not will determine the good leader from the bad. Jesus contrasts himself with a thief. What does he offer the sheep (vv. 7-10)?

④ 'I am the good shepherd'. This is the claim of an authentic, genuine man willing to go beyond mere words. Reading from vv.11-16, how is Jesus different from others who have been in charge of the sheep?

⑤ If you read vv.17-21, you will see different responses from the Father and the people to Jesus' claims and actions as the Good Shepherd. How do they each respond? Why?

Notes

Shepherd and sheep : These are words that mean a leader and his people.

Vv 1-8: The leaders of Israel have been described in Ezekiel 34:1-24 as leaders who exploit and abuse their own people for their own gain. In this same passage, God proclaims himself as the Good Shepherd of Israel.

v. 10 - Fullest : A quality of life that is complete and satisfying.

What about you - a breakthrough?

⑥ Where do you seem to find your life in? Would you say that you are living life to its fullest?

⑦ Jesus seems to give us every reason to have confidence in him as our shepherd. Which of these reasons especially appeals to you?

⑧ If Jesus is to be your Good Shepherd, what are some things you think you should be doing to be under his leadership? What difficulties do you foresee in making him your leader?

Study Four

I AM the Resurrection and the Life

John 11:1-44

Getting Started

① Death and funerals are viewed differently in each of our cultures in Malaysia. In your group, share what you know of different cultures and their understanding of death and funerals.

One extraordinary claim that Jesus makes is that he is here to save people from death. By coming, people have a chance to live forever. What right does he have to make such a tremendous claim? Why then do people who believe in him still die? Let's have a look at this passage and see him prove that he has a right to make such claims.

Come and See

② When a good friend is seriously ill and sends for you, it's only natural that you would want to visit him immediately (vv.1-3). Yet Jesus took his time and delayed his trip there for two days. Why do you think he delayed his journey (vv.1-4)?

③ Martha, Lazarus' sister rushes off to meet Jesus upon hearing of his arrival. She pours out her grief to him about Lazarus' death. In your opinion, what request does Martha seem to make to Jesus (vv.20-27)? What confidence did she have of Jesus to make such a request?

④ Reading verses 25-26, Jesus claims to be able to raise the dead back to life. It is indeed a far-fetched claim. What are some of the difficulties in believing this statement?

⑤ There was this sense of hopelessness and utter grief when Mary, the other sister encounters Jesus. Others were also weeping (vv.28-34). John tells us that Jesus also cried (v.35) and was terribly upset (v.38a). What may be some reasons for Jesus' tears? What does this show us about his view of death?

⑥ In that scene of loss and pain, an unexpected miracle takes place. Jesus calls out to Lazarus, and this man, dead for four days walks out of his tomb, still wrapped in his burial cloth! If you were there, what would have been your response?

Notes

Vv.8: Before this incident, Jesus and his disciples escaped Jerusalem because the people there wanted to stone him for claiming to be one with God (John 10:30,31).

Vv.25,26: Jesus tells Martha that by believing in him, she is not only assured about the resurrection at the last day. She can also experience that eternal life here and now to which resurrection is the prelude.

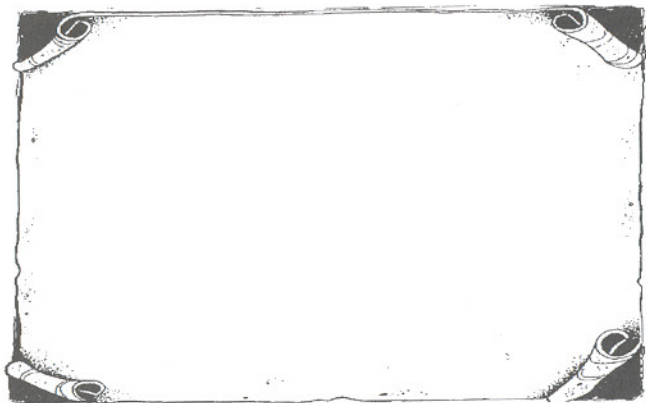
What about you - a breakthrough?

7 For Lazarus' family they encountered a friend who actually has authority over even death! What difference does this make to your own life?

8 What should we do with this good news that Jesus raises the dead to life? Decide as a group on what you can do to spread this good news.

9 Jesus promises us a future. Faith and belief in him is necessary for one to have everlasting life. If you already believe, write a prayer to Jesus about your future after death.

If you don't already believe, write a letter to Jesus about where you currently are in relation to him.



Study Five

I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life

John 14: 1-13

Getting Started

1 In these days, many new discoveries have been made which are complex yet very intriguing. In your opinion, what is the greatest discovery of all? Why?

In the midst of such exciting times, people's attention gets grabbed in all directions. Often we don't even know the direction we are going in life. Logically speaking, the quest for God should be the ultimate quest of mankind. In fact it should be the most important quest for mankind if we believe God exists. In this study, Jesus makes another extraordinary claim about being the only way, the truth and the life. What is he provoking us to think about now?

Come and See

2 Jesus was leaving his disciples. He knows their anxiety and worries about how to carry on. What assurances does he give his disciples that he still cares for them (vv.1-4)?

③ Philip the frank one, voices his thoughts and confusions. Though the disciples knew that Jesus was going to the Father, they still did not know how to get there (v.4). How is Jesus the way, the truth and the life (vv.5-7)?

④ In the past the people of Israel had quite a few opportunities to meet God face to face (e.g. Abraham and Moses). They didn't really need Jesus to meet Him, did they?! Look at the way Jesus responded to Philip. What was he implying about himself (vv.8-10)?

⑤ Here Jesus asks the disciples to have faith in him. What credibility does Jesus offer to enable one to have faith in him (vv.1,11)? What is the power of having faith in him? (vv.12-14)

Notes

v.6: The way to God is not about going to a place. The way to God lies in the knowledge and truth about Him and the experience of His life. It is precisely this knowledge and this experience which Jesus throughout his life, and supremely in his self-sacrifice for mankind, is bringing within man's reach.

Jesus is therefore the way because he is the living truth about God and His relationship with man. By this reason, the life that is shown in his own words and actions, the very life of God Himself, is available for all mankind.

What about you - a breakthrough?

⑥ Having heard Jesus' claim and his assurances to his disciples, what strikes you (again) in your quest for God?

⑦ In your own search for God, what discoveries and frustrations have you had? How has this affected your search for God?

⑧ Jesus shows God to us. How can you show God to your friends? What should your strategies be centred on?

Study Six

I AM the True Vine

John 15:1-10

Getting Started

① 'Friends' is one of the most popular sitcom today. These friends have been living together as a community for many years. Do you think they are an ideal community? In your opinion, what makes and breaks a community?

Jesus' last claim seems to have a very different tone to it. These are his last words to his disciples. He has been with them for 3 years now and would be leaving them soon. He gives his final appeal to them. In essence he calls them to remain in him as a community. He makes it seem a matter of survival for their lives.

Come and See

② Every garden needs someone to keep it in order. Picture a gardener working in his garden. What seems to be the gardener's main task based on verses 1-3?

③ In the midst of describing the difficult task of the gardener in pruning, Jesus makes a startling remark. What does he seem to be implying to his disciples when he declares that they are all clean (vv.2-3)?

④ Bearing fruit is the ultimate reason of a tree's existence. What must the disciples do to be able to bear fruit? What is the outcome for those who fail to bear fruit (vv.4-6)? Ultimately, what happens when they bear fruit (v.8)?

⑤ While it is the branches that bear fruit, the main source is to be the vine. In the process of bearing fruit, what do you think Jesus as the true vine does? How does this help the disciples in bearing fruit? (vv.5-7)

⑥ Again Jesus promises that he will answer all the prayers of his disciples and that he will continue to love them (vv.7,10). What is required from the disciples to be able to receive these blessings?

What about you - a breakthrough?

- 7 Look back at your life.
 - a) Where is your main source of life coming from?
 - b) In what way have you been fruitful?
- 8 What are some "branches" in your life that you think need to be trimmed clean in order to enhance your fruitfulness? What are some difficulties you think you may face by allowing Jesus to trim off these "branches"?
- 9 End with a prayer to God, asking him to give you strength to be trimmed down by him.

