

# GOING DEEPER

**April 27th to May 2nd**

**Scripture Reading(s) for the week: John 14:1-11; John 1:8, 3:31, 6:41, 51**

Think about some of the things that you believe in, even though you have no personal experience of it. If you are having trouble coming up with something, consider this – Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) which we now call Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena (UAPs). I did a little bit of research and discovered the following. November of 2025 YouGov did a poll of 1,114 adults and found out that 47% think that aliens have visited Earth. Another survey during that same period reported that 10% of respondents have personally seen a UFO/UAP. Additionally, 68% of Americans said they believe the US government “knows more about UFOs/UAPs than it is telling [the public.] This prompted me to go a step further and look for answers to the question, “What percentage of Americans believe in God?” According to Gallup in 1944, 96% of Americans believed in God. In 2025 it was 81%. Belief in UAPs is on the rise while belief in God is on the decline. Why?

I think some of it could be perception mixed with what is known and unknown. On one hand movies like “Signs” or “Independence Day” leave us to believe that aliens have nefarious intentions. The counterpoint would be “ET,” a harmless troll of an alien who simply wanted to go home. The truth of the matter is we simply don’t know – there is no material evidence, so we enjoy the mystery. Juxtapose that with the human experience with religion and worship of deities. There is voluminous evidence of humans using religion for evil purposes making the masses skeptical of any good intentions. Even in Christendom this is true. And if the religious leaders are flawed in this way, then the God they worship must be as well.

I like reading bumper stickers. People have some that are exceptionally funny, some are insightful, and some are mean and crude. I remember seeing one that said this: “Do you know what my liberal arts degree taught me to say? Would you like fries with that order?” If I could print my own bumper sticker it would read, “No taxation without ALL NEW representation!” Of course, you also see bumper stickers for political candidates or ones about pets. When you see a bumper sticker, what assumption or judgment do you make about the person driving the car? Is it positive or negative?

Jesus told his disciples that he had to leave them to go and prepare a place for them so that when it was their time, they could join him in this new place. Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life . . . If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Our greatest challenge as Christians is to first see the Father through the activity of Jesus and second, to make the Father known to the world. Especially to a world that needs mercy, grace, and healing. Two thousand years later it is still possible for the world to see and know God the Father. It just so happens though, that it is through people who have their

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flaws. The depth of your discipleship determines the level at which you will see and know the God the Father. It also impacts the power of your personal representation of God to the world. If we truly want the world to see and know God and the goodness of God, this necessitates us working on this ourselves.

I invite you to take time and read each of the scriptures above followed by reflection on the questions below. Consider the ways in which you are learning to see and know God the Father through Jesus the Son. Lastly, I pray that God bless the reading of God's Word and the meditations of your heart.

## Questions to Consider this week:

**Monday:** Where do you fit in the conversation of aliens visiting Earth?

**Tuesday:** How about the idea of UFOs/UAPs? Real or not?

**Wednesday:** Do you have friends or family who do not believe in God? Write down their name.

**Thursday:** How does Jesus reveal God the Father to you?

**Friday:** How does that correlate to Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life?

**Saturday:** Is it important to you to follow Jesus believing you will also reveal God to the world? Why?

## Actions for the Week:

**Head:** Define how Jesus is the way, truth, and life for you.

**Heart:** Deal honestly with your assurances and your doubts about knowing and seeing God.

**Hand:** Join a group or project that seeks to make God known to the world.

**Prayer:** Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring love. Where there is offense, let me bring pardon. Where there is discord, let me bring union. Where there is error, let me bring truth. Where there is doubt, let me bring faith. Where there is despair, let me bring hope. Where there is darkness, let me bring your light. Where there is sadness, let me bring joy. O Divine Master, let me not seek as much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love, for it is in giving that one receives, it is in self-forgetting that one finds, it is in pardoning that one is pardoned, and it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life. Make me your instrument by which the world sees and knows your everlasting joy! Amen

(Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, 1912 version; last line added by Rev. Dr. Jim Hoffman)

If you have thoughts, comments, or questions about today's service or this week's devotional, please e-mail them to [jimh@stjohnsumc.org](mailto:jimh@stjohnsumc.org).