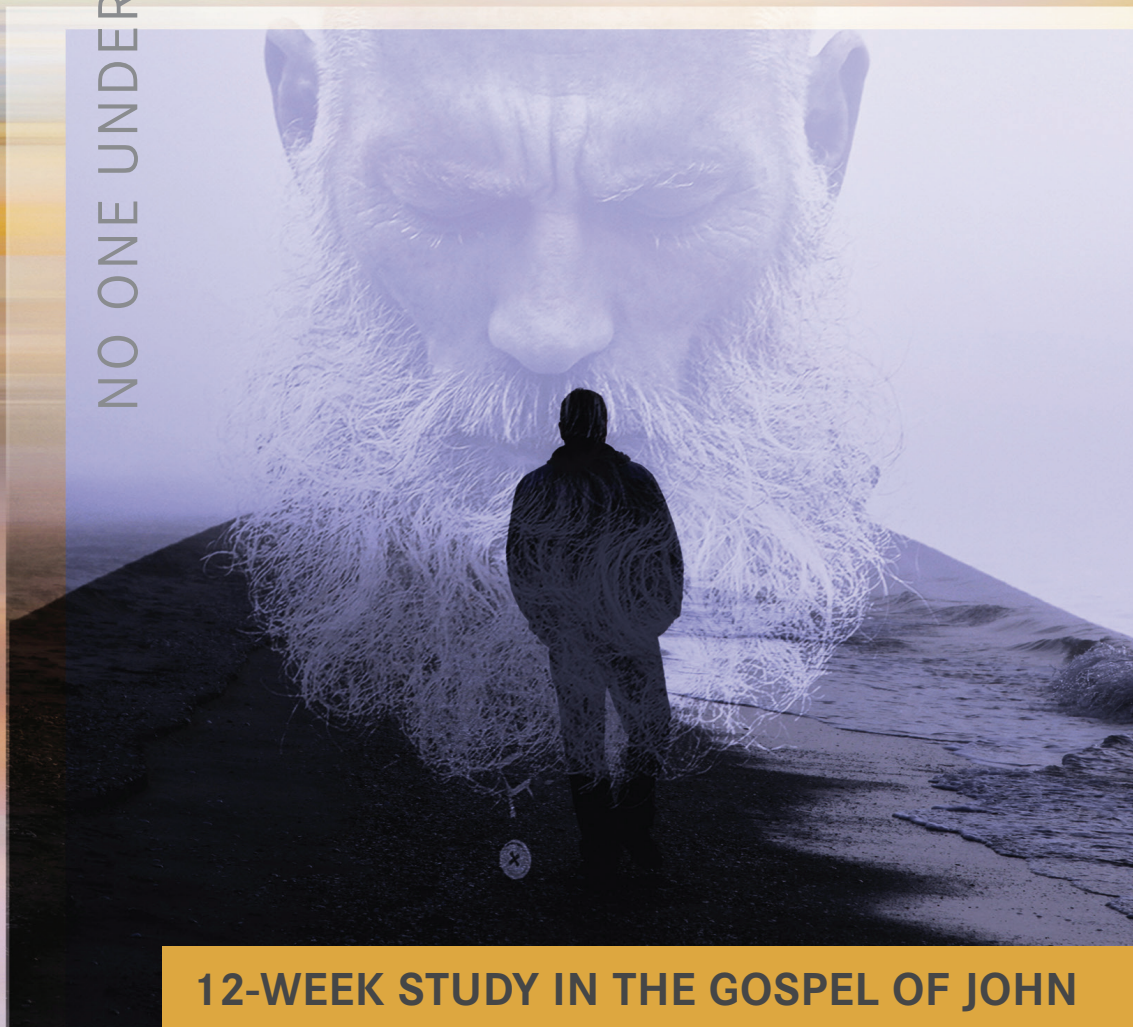


GOSPEL OF JOHN

NO ONE UNDERSTANDS JESUS



12-WEEK STUDY IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

A **CRU.COMM** BIBLE STUDY WRITTEN BY **ADAM DIXON**



THE STORY BEGINS • λογος

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 1:1-18

John the Apostle

Peter, James, and John were Jesus' primary disciples. They saw the transfiguration (Mk. 9:2-13) and he took them places he didn't take anyone else. He also told them things that he didn't tell anyone else. But even among them, most people agree that John was the closest one to Jesus. John even called himself "the apostle whom Jesus loved." Here are just a couple examples of John's relationship to Jesus.

(1) Consider how this scene from the last supper unfolds:

"After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.' The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.' So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot."

John was leaning on Jesus' chest during this meal. And Peter, knowing that Jesus would tell John what he meant, prompted John to ask Jesus who would betray him. And Jesus told him.

(2) Consider this scene from the cross:

"... standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home."

The Book of John

Jesus loves everybody. But John was his closest friend. And John's gospel is very distinct. The other gospels all describe Jesus' heritage from an earthly perspective, John, in contrast, doesn't start with his ministry, his parents, or John the Baptist. He describes Jesus' eternal pre-existence. John calls him the λογος (logos) of God.

What's the Big Idea?

The first 18 verses of John's Gospel (often called the prologue) are not just an introduction to John's Gospel. They summarize his whole message: "The Word became flesh!" This is the greatest news the world has ever known!

What's the Problem?

Many people don't know who Jesus is, or recognize how much they need a Savior.



John 1:1-5

John's opening words, "In the beginning," are a reference back to Genesis 1:1. Genesis reads, "In the beginning God created the heavens and Earth." John says, "In the beginning the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Greek term translated "Word" in this passage is λογος (logos).

λογος (logos)

Scholars have done a ton of research on that word. It's a Greek word with a number of Greek nuances but John is using it in a Hebrew way. Basically, what it means is "expression." Jesus is the expression of God to us. To use a quote from D.A. Carson, Jesus is God's ultimate self-disclosure, the Person Who is His own Son. In other words, if you want to see what God is like, just look at Jesus.

Instead of talking about Jesus' earthly heritage, John goes straight to His pre-existence. Jesus worked alongside God the Father and the Spirit to create the world. People often say that Jesus was the Agent of Creation. Hebrews 1:2 is a great parallel verse. It says that "in these last days, (God) has spoken to us through His Son, through Whom He created the world." Another great parallel is verse 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.'"

John 1:6-18

Verses 6-18 discuss John the Baptist, the fore-runner sent to prepare the way for the Messiah (see Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3). John proclaimed that Jesus was the light of the world.

A Fallen-Condition Focus - Verses 5 and 10-11

Look closely at verse 5. John the Apostle says that Jesus is the light of the world, but darkness has not overcome him. Look also at verses 10-11. Though Jesus made the world and came into the world, the world did not recognize him. That's the drama of the book of John. You'll see it in every study. Though Jesus is the Son of God, no-one recognizes it. No-one understands Jesus. As you lead this study you'll want to be sensitive to this theme. You'll want to share Jesus with those who haven't trusted Him, and you'll want to encourage those who have placed their trust in Jesus to continue to trust Him daily.

Back to John 1:6-18

Jesus brings light and life to all who receive him. Be sure to answer the Bible study questions yourself before leading this study, and consider how Jesus has brought life and light to you. In verses 12-13, John says that all who receive Jesus, who "believe in his name," become children of God. Invite your group members to put their trust in Jesus. A great parallel verse for this section is 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come."

John describes Jesus' glory as being full of grace and truth. Jesus is absolutely gracious, and he fulfills the Law of truth. Sometimes people who abandon truth and fall into licentiousness (sin) call it "grace." Others abandon grace and fall into legalism and they call it "truth." Sin and legalism are perversions of grace and truth. Jesus is the real deal. He's 100% grace and 100% truth at the same time. He's just that good.

Theologians have also noted that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man at the same time. He's not part-God and part-man. He's not God sometimes and man other times. He's 100% of both, all the time. That's the incarnation. In the words of Gregory of Nazianus (4th century) "What is not assumed is not healed." Jesus, who is God's Son, became a man to redeem mankind.

What's Our Response?

In this study you want to help your group understand that Jesus is fully God and fully man, and that he brings life and light to those who trust him.

What Are the Questions?

John 1:1-18

LAUNCH

What are some things you hope to get out of this bible study?

EXPLORE

Read 1:1-5.

1. What do you think John meant when he called Jesus "the Word?"
2. In John 1:1-3, what things does John declare to be true of the Word? Why is each of these facts significant?
3. This passage includes several allusions to creation. Look up Hebrews 1:2 and 2 Corinthians 4:6. What do you see?
4. What do the symbols of life and light tell us about Jesus? How has he brought these qualities into your life?
7. What does it mean to receive Jesus? What are the results of receiving Jesus (vs. 12-13)?
8. According to John 1:14-18, what aspects of God's character has Jesus revealed to us?
9. Why do we need both grace and truth? When truth is missing, what's the result? When grace is missing, what's the result?
10. Is there such a thing as too much grace or too much truth?

Read 1:6-18.

5. Who is the "man sent from God" in verse 6? What did he come to do?
6. John contrasts Jesus' rejection by the majority with his reception by a few (verses 9-13). Have things changed today? Why or why not? What does that tell us about the condition of the human heart?
11. Verse 14 says, "The Word became flesh." Which of these statements accurately describes Jesus?
 - A. He is 100% God and 100% man
 - B. He is 50% God and 50% man
 - C. Sometimes he is God and sometimes he is man
12. Why is it important that Jesus is both man and God?

APPLY

13. What has been your experience of Jesus up until now?
14. Did you learn anything new about Jesus from this study? What are some things that you love about Jesus?
15. Do you lean more toward license or legalism when you struggle with sin?
16. Was there a time in your life where you began to follow Jesus?

What Are the Answers?

1. When John called Jesus "the Word," he used the Greek word λογος (logos). He was saying that Jesus is the full expression of God to us. He is God's Son.
2. "He was in the beginning." Jesus has existed forever. "He was with God." Jesus is God's Son. "The Word was God." Jesus and God the Father are one in essence, but distinct in person. "All things were made through him." Jesus was the Agent of Creation.
3. Consider how these verses inform John 1:1-3.
4. Encourage the group to share.
5. John the Baptist. Look up Malichi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.
6. In Jesus' day, some people received him and followed him, but most rejected him. Few people really understood who he is. Similarly, many people do not follow Jesus today.
7. Notice how the phrase "believed in his name" parallels "those who did receive him" in verse 12. To receive Jesus is to believe in his name. This is not simple intellectual understanding. It involves the heart. To believe in Jesus is to trust in Jesus.
8. Synonyms for grace include love, mercy, kindness and unmerited favor. Truth is similar to righteousness and purity.
9. The definition of licentiousness is: "lacking legal or moral restraints." Sin results when truth is ignored. But that's not our only potential problem. Another type of sin, legalism, results when grace is ignored. Legalism is an over-confidence in one's personal righteousness and a tendency to condemn others.
10. Not really. It's the absence of either one that's the problem. Jesus is 100% both.
11. Option A is the correct one. Options B and C are ancient heresies. John 1:1 speaks of Jesus' divinity. Verse 14 speaks of his humanity.
12. Jesus had to become man to redeem mankind. To quote a 4th Century theologian, "What is not assumed is not healed." See the "What do I need to know about this passage" section. Jesus is also God. And he demonstrated his divinity with his character, his teaching, his miracles, his defeat of Satan, and his resurrection from the dead.
13. Encourage the group to share
14. Encourage the group to share
15. Encourage the group to share
16. Encourage the group to share

Memorize

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God.

John 1:12



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

A PRIVATE REVELATION • Miracles

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 2:1-12

The Book of Signs

The book of John naturally falls into two parts. The first part is called The Book of Signs and it covers three years of Jesus' life. The second part is called The Book of the Hour and it covers one week. We have no way of knowing how many miracles John saw Jesus do, but we know which ones he recorded for us:

The Book of Signs

Turning water into wine (John 2)
 Healing an official's son (John 4)
 Healing a lame man (John 5)
 Feeding 5000 people (John 6)
 Walking on water (John 6)
 Healing a blind man (John 9)
 Raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11)

Three years

The Book of the Hour

The last week of Jesus' life on Earth
 culminates in his resurrection (John 12-21)

One Week

Background

During the first few days of Jesus' ministry, he began to choose key disciples from among John the Baptist's followers. Jesus' first disciples included Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathaniel, and John. Today we find them at a wedding.

Weddings in the Ancient Near East

In Jesus' day, weddings were an even bigger deal than they are today. Nowadays couples often fall in love on their own, but back then it was a family decision. Everyone was involved, and everyone needed to be satisfied. Parents had to agree with the courtship, and the ceremony was quite elaborate. When the special day came, the bride would get ready in her house and her attendants would position themselves outside the home to await the coming of the groom. The groom would come from an unknown place at an unknown time. At some point someone would see him and yell, "Behold, the bridegroom comes!" And everyone would rush out to join him as he came to pick up his bride. As the procession neared door of the house, someone yelled "Behold, the bridegroom is here!" The wedding party entered the house and literally picked up the bride and carried her to the groom's house, celebrating all the way. Once they got to the groom's house, the doors were shut and the couple went into a back room to consummate the marriage. When they came out, the party began, and it often lasted seven days.

What's the Big Idea?

On the seventh day after beginning his ministry, Jesus revealed himself as the Creator.

What's the Problem?

We need God to deliver us from our inadequacy, scandals, and shame.



If you want to understand this passage, it's important to note that marriages at this time were very public ceremonies that had two key components. What happened in the back room affirmed the bride's purity, and the grandeur of the party affirmed the grooms fidelity and ability to provide for her. Everything had to go well. The groom and his family were responsible to demonstrate their ability to provide and care for the girl who had just consummated her marriage to this man. To fail to host a good party wasn't just embarrassing, it was illegal.

John 2:1-5

This passage tells us that not only was Jesus' mother invited to this wedding, Jesus and his disciples were invited as well. Scholars have pointed out that Jesus' mother was probably a member of the wedding party. In this passage she (1) told the servants what to do, (2) knew about the crisis of the wine before the master of the feast, and (3) had concern for how the event was going.

Because of the nature of the culture in the Ancient Near East, running out of wine was a big deal at a wedding. The bride's family could sue for damages in such a situation, and the new marriage would start off on rocky ground.

Mary and Jesus

What would it like to be the mother of Jesus? Scholars generally agree that Jesus hadn't grown up doing miracles. But he wasn't an average kid either. An angel announced his birth. Mary was a virgin when he was born. God promised Mary that her son would sit on the throne of David. King Herod tried to kill him, etc. She's seen some stuff. And when there's potential for this party to get disrupted, she turned to her son.

Jesus' response was not rude. If you read verse 4 in several translations, you'll see that it's difficult to translate. Jesus was polite, but he distanced himself from his mom's request. Notice how she responded to the servants, "Do exactly what Jesus tells you to do." And don't miss that little phrase, "my hour has not yet come." For the next 8 chapters, John will repeat that phrase over and over again. Then, after a confrontation with Jewish leaders in chapter 12 Jesus will say "the hour has come," and he'll march straight into Jerusalem to be crucified. Jesus knows that what he's about to do will start the clock ticking on his crucifixion. And he is so smooth. This, his first miracle, is a private miracle, initially just for his disciples.

John 2:6-12

The six water jars that John mentions in verse 6 held 20-30 gallons each. This water was for washing the feet and hands of the guests as they arrived. If you were to re-tell this story in today's terms, you'd see how bizarre it is. Imagine Jesus removing himself from the party and going through the house poking around until he found the hot water heater. It's covered with dust but he knows it's sanitary inside. He rips it off the pipes, "they won't need it later anyway," and tells the servants to fill it with water then take some to the master of the banquet.

The master's response is clearer in the original language than it is in English. He grabbed the groom and basically said, "This is the best wine ever! You're the best groom in history!" The only people who initially knew what had happened were Jesus, his disciples, and some servants. The value of that wine in today's standards is easily \$20,000 to \$60,000. That's a pretty nice wedding gift.

Scholars have noted that this wedding occurred 7 days after Jesus began his ministry. Remember what happened on the seventh day of Creation? God gave Eve to Adam, before the curse. And here we have God again, at a wedding, and he's bringing redemption to our inadequacy and shame.

What's Our Response?

In this study you will want to help your group understand that Jesus' abundant grace frees us from our scandals and shame.

What Are the Questions?

John 2:1-12; 1st John 1:1-4

LAUNCH

Can you name any of Jesus' miracles from the Bible? If you could be there to see one, which would you choose?

EXPLORE

Read 2:1-5.

1. Why do you think Jesus and his disciples were invited to this wedding in Cana? From these verses, do you think Mary was playing a role in organizing the wedding feast?
2. Why would running out of wine be such a big deal?
3. When Mary asked Jesus to help, what do you think she was expecting him to do?
4. Was Jesus being rude by calling his mother, "Woman" in verse 4? Why do you think he addressed her that way?
5. What did Jesus mean by "My hour has not yet come" in verse 4?
8. Look at verses 5, 7, and 8. How did Mary and the servants respond to Jesus? What do you think those servants were thinking as they approached the master of the banquet?
9. Who knew what Jesus had done? At what point do we find out the water had become wine?
10. What did the banquet master immediately do after he tasted the wine? Why? Who did he give credit to? How do you think the groom reacted?
11. If you were one of the disciples and you saw this happen, how do you think you would have reacted?
12. John described this as "the first of Jesus' signs." What was it a sign of?

Read 2:6-12.

6. What were the water jars normally used for?
7. Obviously, Jesus could have created wine any way he chose. In your opinion, why did Jesus command those servants to fill those pots with water?
13. Years after this event, the Apostle John wrote the letter we call 1st John. According to these verses, why did he write this letter?
14. At some point later, the groom and everyone else realized what had happened at that party. How do you think the groom felt then?

APPLY

15. This wine in Canaan wasn't Jesus' most recent act of creation. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, what is he still creating today?
16. The groom in this story had a "near miss." If Jesus hadn't showed up in time, he was in a bad situation. Has God ever showed up just in time for you?
17. Jesus saved this groom from embarrassment and gave him a great blessing. Has Jesus done something similar for you? Do you believe he can?
18. The groom was utterly clueless at first. Has God been at work in your life "behind the scenes?" Name some ways that God has blessed you.
19. Have you ever struggled to trust Jesus? How does this story challenge you to trust him more?

What Are the Answers?

1. Mary appears to be one of the members of the wedding party because she tells servants what to do and knows about the wine before the master of the feast.
 2. See the "What do I need to know about this passage" section.
 3. It's doubtful that Mary was asking Jesus for a miracle. He hadn't performed miracles before this point. But she knew the prophecies about him.
 4. Jesus was not being rude. But he did distance himself from her request. Another translation says, "Dear woman, why do you involve me?"
 5. See also John 7:30, 8:20, and 12:23. Jesus' hour is the last week of his life- his journey to the cross.
 6. It's significant that the water was used for purification. This cleansing was required by the OT Law. Jesus was about to fulfill the Law for us.
 7. By using these water jars, Jesus was able to perform a secret miracle.
 8. Maybe the servants were thinking, "What's he going to say when he tastes washing water instead of wine?" Notice how this miracle slowly unfolds. It took no effort whatsoever for Jesus to bless a party privately – and privately demonstrate his power as Creator.
 9. It appears that only Jesus knew what he had done at first. We don't even find out until halfway through verse 9.
 10. He interrupted the feast to congratulate the groom. This was likely the best wine he'd ever tasted. And the groom probably had no idea what was going on. It was his wedding day. He was just glad things were going well.
11. Discuss
 12. Jesus revealed himself as the Creator through this miracle.
 13. Years after he walked with Jesus, the Apostle John penned this letter. It's fun to read the Gospel of John and the Letter of John at the same time. John wrote both to lead us to Christ.
 14. The groom must have experienced a lot of emotions! At first he probably felt like he dodged a bullet. Then he realized he had \$40,000 in wine on hand. Then he realized a miracle had happened at his wedding...
 15. Every time someone trusts Christ, He makes them into a new creation (see the memory verse).
 16. Encourage the group to share
 17. Encourage the group to share
 18. Some people have defined Christian maturity as "conscious awareness of God's presence everywhere and all the time."
 19. Encourage the group to share

Memorize

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

A PRIVATE CONVERSATION • Born from Above

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 3

The Gospel of John Continues

After his miracle at the wedding in Cana, Jesus disrupted business at the Temple. He made a whip out of cords and drove out the animals. He turned over the table of the money changers, dumping out their money. He told them, "Do not make my Father's house a house of trade!" His actions prompted a confrontation with Jewish leaders. Today we're picking up in John 3.

Background- The History of Israel

In many ways, the Old Testament era came to a close 400 years before Jesus was born. By 400 B.C., obedient Jews were returning from exile to rebuild Jerusalem. Malachi was prophesying. It was a time of renewal recorded in the biblical books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi. But it also marks the end of the Old Testament. After Malachi's ministry, prophesy ceased in Israel. God did not speak for the next 400 years. Theologians call this time period the Intertestamental era.

Four Hundred Years of Silence

The Intertestamental era (400 B.C. - A.D. 1) was a chaotic time for Israel. Various empires competed for domination of the world, and each one ruled Israel for a period. Persia controlled Israel initially. Then Alexander the Great created a vast empire and Greece ruled Israel. Then Egypt ruled Israel briefly. Then Rome arose, and became the greatest empire in history. Each of these empires introduced changes to Israel. The Egyptians, for instance, turned the office of the High Priest into a political position, and installed a cabinet of ruling officials called the Sanhedrin. The Greeks aggressively promoted Greek culture and Greek gods, prompting many Jews to revolt. Rome taxed Israel heavily.

Pharisees and the Sanhedrin

New types of political and religious leaders arose because of all these changes. By Jesus' day, Pharisees were one of the leading groups. Pharisees were scholars who tried hard to obey the laws in the Old Testament and a dizzying array of man-made laws which they added to the Old Testament. The Jews respected them and gave them great social, religious and political influence. Pharisees usually took great pride in their positions. Nicodemus, (in this passage), is also called a "Ruler of the Jews." That means he was also one of the elite 70 members of the Sanhedrin, the political / religious body that ruled Israel. The Sanhedrin ruled under the supervision of Herod, who reported directly to the Roman emperor. A Roman governor and legion were also stationed in the area.

What's the Big Idea?

The Son of God is the Light of the world, and all who look to Him are saved.

What's the Problem?

Mankind is in the darkness and often prefers the darkness to the light.



No-one Understands Jesus

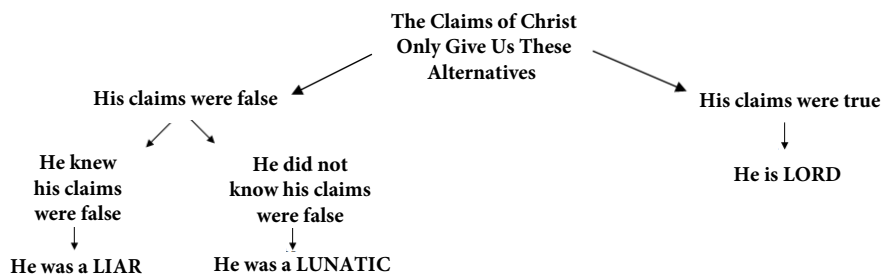
One of the key themes of the Gospel of John is how "No-one understands Jesus." As you read, take note of how people misunderstand him. Jesus was speaking of his body in John 2 when some Jews thought he was talking about the temple. In this passage, Nicodemus is going to make a similar mistake.

Words have various meanings, as you know. For instance, the meaning of the word "late" changes drastically according to how it's used in a sentence. Consider these examples: "Sorry I'm late." "The late Mr. Jefferson left his estate to his daughter."

Vs. 1-4 In order to understand Nicodemus' dilemma, you have to know something about a particular Greek word. The word is ἀνωθεν (anōthen). It means either "above" or "again." Nicodemus came to Jesus at night for a discreet conversation, and Jesus got right to the point. Jesus said, "Truly, truly I say to you, no-one can see God unless he is born ἀνωθεν (anōthen)." What he probably meant was "born from above." But what Nicodemus heard was "born again." And Nicodemus ran with that interpretation. "How can this be?" he said, "No-one can enter his mother's womb a second time..."

Vs. 5-8 Jesus told Nicodemus that he was confusing spiritual birth with physical birth. And he rebuked Nicodemus, saying, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?" As a scholar of the Old Testament, Nicodemus should have recognized that Jesus was talking about the work of the Spirit (Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 3:25-27; Joel 2:28-29).

Nicodemus thought Jesus was just a special teacher. That's a common mistake. In his book Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis said: "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said, wouldn't be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level with a man who says he's a poached egg – or else he would be the devil of hell: you must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a demon: or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But don't come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great moral teacher. He hasn't left that alternative open to us."



Vs. 9-21 Jesus referred to his incarnation in 3:13. And he shared a great image in verse 14. Be sure to unpack it. Read the story in Numbers 21:4-9. One time when the Israelites were being attacked by snakes, God had Moses put a bronze snake on a pole, and whoever suffered a snakebite could look at that snake and be healed. Just as Moses lifted that snake up in the wilderness to heal the people, Jesus would be lifted up on a cross to bring healing to the world.

And don't gloss over John 3:16. It's arguably the best one verse presentation of the gospel in the whole Bible and it's your memory verse. You will also visit 1st John 5:11-13 briefly. John's epistle corresponds very nicely with his gospel.

What's Our Response?

In this study you want your group to understand that everyone who looks to Jesus will be saved.

What Are the Questions?

John 3:1-21

LAUNCH

Can you think of a time when you received some important news?

EXPLORE

Read 3:1-2.

1. What do we know about Nicodemus, according to these verses?
2. What did it mean that he was a Pharisee?
3. Why did he come to see Jesus? Why did he come at night?
4. How did Nicodemus address Jesus? Was he correct? Why or why not?
5. If you were to walk up to Jesus today, how would you greet him?

Read 3:3-15.

6. How might you summarize Jesus' response in verse 3? Does it seem weird at first? What does the image of birth convey?
7. How did Nicodemus respond in verses 4 and 9? Did he understand what Jesus said?
8. What did Jesus mean by, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"?

9. Have you ever had a friend who began a new relationship with God? How would you describe the difference God made in their life?

10. Why was Jesus amazed at Nicodemus' ignorance (vs. 10-12)?

11. What did Jesus mean in verses 12-13?

Look up Numbers 21:4-9

12. What did Jesus claim about himself in verses 14-15?

Read John 3:16-21

13. Why does our response to God's Son determine our destiny?

14. According to this passage, did Jesus come to condemn the world? But how do those who reject Jesus end up?

15. What does the light in verse 19 represent? How many times is Jesus called "the light" in this passage? What do verses 20-21 mean?

Look up 1st John 5:11-13

16. The same John who wrote this gospel wrote the letter we call 1st John. According to these verses, why did he write that letter?

APPLY

17. Do you believe in Christ? Why or why not? Does 1st John 5:11-13 bring you comfort? Why or why not?

18. Who around you needs to look to Christ?

19. What are some reasons people have trouble believing in Jesus?

20. Jesus has already been called "the Light of the world" a dozen times in John so far. What would it look like for you to take some steps away from darkness into the light?

21. What would it look like for you to lead others into the light?

What Are the Answers?

1. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin.
2. See the "What do I need to know about this passage" section.
3. This was obviously a private meeting. Nicodemus came to see Jesus because of his miracles and because he drove merchants out of the temple.
4. Yes and no. He's a Teacher who came from God, and God is with him, but he's much more than that as well. He's also the Son of God in the flesh! To help your group see what Nicodemus is missing, you might share the C.S. Lewis quote or the diagram from the "What you need to know about this passage" section or revisit John 1:1.
5. Discuss
6. Birth is one of many New Testament pictures of what happens when someone believes in Jesus Christ.
7. Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus' statement about a new birth. Maybe he had too much confidence in his heritage, being born as a Jew.
8. Jesus showed Nicodemus that the means of the new birth are not physical but spiritual. See Isaiah 44:3-5 for an example of water and wind as the life-giving symbols of the Spirit. See the sidebar for a special note.
9. Discuss
10. Nicodemus was a scholar who should have recognized Jesus' reference to water and spirit as the work of God. Consult Isaiah 44:3-5 and Ezekiel 37:9-10.
11. Jesus stated that he had come from heaven and was speaking of spiritual realities he had personally witnessed.
12. Look up Numbers 21:4-9. This is a great image. Jesus stated: "Just as Israelites were saved by looking to the snake Moses lifted up, mankind is saved by looking at me, when God lifts me up on a cross."
13. It's a big deal to miss Jesus because he's the Son of God. See Hebrews 10:28-29.
14. Jesus did not come to condemn the world (vs. 17) but those who reject him certainly wind up condemned (vs. 18).
15. "The light" represents Jesus. There are 5 references to light in this passage. Seven more occurred in Jn. 1:1-9.
16. John wrote the epistle we call 1st John to assure believers in Christ that they have eternal life.
17. Discuss
18. Encourage your group to think through the people they encounter who would benefit from knowing Christ.
- 19-21. Encourage the group to share

Memorize

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Special note on Baptism:

Some groups believe that a person must be baptized to be saved. They use this passage, Acts 2:38, and a handful of other verses to make their point. They're confusing images and illustrations of the grace of God for the grace of God itself. Water baptism is not essential for salvation. Consult Romans 10:9-10, Acts 16:31, Ephesians 1:13-14, 1st John 5:11-13, and etc.

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Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

WHO SAW THAT COMING? • Go and Tell

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 4

Judea and Samaria

Centuries before Jesus walked on the Earth, certain events had transpired to create the culture of the 1st Century A.D. Here's a little background information.

Jerusalem was the capital city of Israel and the site of the Temple of God in ancient Israel. But in 931 B.C., the nation split into two parts. The southern part maintained Jerusalem as its capital and became known as Judah. The northern part kept the name Israel, and created a new capital in a city called Samaria. And in an effort to keep his people from going to Jerusalem to worship God at the Temple, the new king of new Israel created two idols and made idolatry the national religion of his nation. You can read this story in 1 Kings 12. This act, by King Jeroboam, is called "Israel's sin" throughout the Old Testament. Judah and Israel endured a full-blown civil war during this era.

God eventually judged Israel for their idolatry. In 722 B.C. the empire of Assyria besieged Samaria, captured the city, and exiled the leading people. And Assyria had a particularly effective method of conquest. They spread the exiled Israelites throughout their entire empire and required those who remained in the land to marry Assyrians, who brought a variety of pagan religions with them. Through this technique, the Assyrians succeeded in "breeding out" the native Israelites. The descendants of Northern Israel became forever known as Samaritans (not Jews) since those events.

God judged Judah too, but to a lesser extent. Judah was captured by Babylon in 586 B.C. but Babylon had a completely different method of exiling captives. Many Jews even became leaders in the Babylonian government (see Daniel, for example). And then a kingdom called the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon and reversed the exiling process altogether. They allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

Many Jews did return. Some leaders from that time include Ezra and Nehemiah. They rebuilt Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple of God. At the same time, however, Samaritans built a copy of the temple at a place called Mt. Gerizim for their false religion. The Jews destroyed that temple, but Mt. Gerizim continued to be a stronghold of idolatry for the Samaritans.

What's the Big Idea?

God delights in saving sinners!
No-one can outdistance His love.

What's the Problem?

We've sinful by heritage, and we naturally gravitate toward idols.



OT History Timeline

- Creation and Fall of Mankind (Gen 1-11)
- Selection of Abram and the Rise of the People of Israel (Gen 12-50)
- The Rise of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt (Exodus, Numbers)
- The Law given on Mt. Sinai (Leviticus, Deuteronomy)
- Conquest of the Promised Land (Joshua, Judges)
- The Rise of the Kingdom of Israel (1-2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1-10)
- Solomon Turns from Following the Lord (1 Kings 11)
- 931 B.C. --- Israel Splits in Two: Judah [South] and Israel [North] (1 Kings 12)
- Jeroboam Makes Idolatry the Official Religion of Israel [North] (1 Kings 12)
- War Between Israel and Judah (1 Kings 13 - 2 Kings 16)
- 722 B.C.--- Assyria Destroys Israel [North] (2 Kings 17)
- 586 B.C.--- Babylon Invades Jerusalem in Judah [South] (2 Kings 25)
- Jews Return to the Land beginning in 538 B.C.
- 430 B.C. --- Jews Begin to Rebuild the Land and the People (Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi)
- 400 B.C.--- Prophecy Ceases for the next 400 Years During the Intertestamental Era

Samaritans

By Jesus' day, Jews from Judea (formerly Judah) hated Samaritans for political, historical, and religious reasons. They had experienced a two-hundred year war with Samaria (Northern Israel) years earlier. Moreover, these Samaritans had intermarried with enemies of God's people, and they were famous for their false religion. To quote one author, Samaritans were filthy, inbred idolaters.

Vs. 1-4 When Jesus stopped by that well in Samaria, he was near one of the most famous centers of idolatry in the history of Israel. And then he spoke to a Samaritan woman. By doing so, Jesus deliberately bypassed at least three cultural barriers: (1) Rabbi's and religious leaders did not associate with immoral people. (2) No Jew had any dealings with Samaritans. (3) It also wasn't acceptable for Jewish men to talk casually to women in public.

"I know that Messiah is coming"

During the Intertestamental period, the Jews had a lot of time to reflect on the history of Israel. And one thing was becoming clear. The nation was beginning to realize they needed a perfect Savior. All the promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 17:1-5), Isaac (Gen. 22; 26), Jacob (Gen. 28:10-16; 32:22-32) and Joseph (Gen 48:15-16) anticipated a son who would bless the nations. Moses promised the people a better prophet than himself (Deut. 18:15). God promised David a Son who would have an eternal throne (2 Sam. 7:16). Isaiah spoke of a righteous Branch, a suffering Servant who would deliver Israel (Isaiah 11; 42:1-17) and a righteous Lamb who would be pierced for their transgressions (Isaiah 53). The prophet Zecharaia also spoke of a savior who would be pierced for the people (Zech. 12:10). The Psalms spoke of a coming Messiah (Psalms 22; 24; 34; 45; 72; 89; 110). The sacrificial system and the rest of the Law anticipated a greater deliverance (Heb. 9-10). The prophet Malachi told the Jews to look for a Fore-runner before the coming of the Messiah (Mal. 3:1; 4:5). It goes on and on.

No-One Understands Jesus

What's remarkable about this passage is how this Samaritan woman actually understands Jesus. Not even Nicodemus, a Pharisee and Ruler of the Jews, understood Jesus. But this Samaritan woman is right on point! It's a surprising, delightful, unexpected twist in the story. Moreover, this passage is full of joy! Be sure to notice the woman's joy (she runs off without her water jar) and Jesus' joy (he can't even eat).

What's Our Response?

This passage is packed with joy. You'll want your group to notice how much Jesus enjoys saving people, and to identify people around them who need to know his love.

What Are the Questions?

John 4:1-41

LAUNCH

What types of things bring joy to your heart?

EXPLORE

Read John 4:1-4.

1. Why did Jesus leave Judea and what does the text mean by “and he had to pass through Samaria?” What’s the big deal about Samaria?

Read John 4:5-14

2. People generally came to draw water early in the morning. Why do you think this woman came when no-one else was around?
3. Why was this woman surprised by Jesus' question?
4. How did Jesus turn the tables on the woman in verse 10? What is he offering her?
5. Did the woman understand what Jesus was offering her?

Read John 4:15-26.

6. As soon as she requested the gift Jesus was offering, he brought up her long list of sins. Why? Was he trying to embarrass her?
7. After Jesus put his finger on the huge issue in that woman's life, she brought up a question about a mountain. What's the big deal about that mountain in verses 19-24?

8. Jesus had a meaningful discussion with the Samaritan women about true, authentic worship. He even said “the Father seeks” worshippers who worship Him in spirit and truth. What do you think that type of worship looks like?

9. What did Jesus mean when he said salvation was “of the Jews” in verse 22? Did she understand?

10. How do you think the woman felt when Jesus said, “I, the One speaking to you, am He”?

Read John 4:27-42.

11. According to this passage, do you think the Samaritan woman genuinely believed? Why? Why did she run back into town?
12. How is the disciples' confusion about food similar to the woman's confusion about water?

Turn to 2nd Timothy 2:2

13. How has the message of Christ spread around the world?

Back to John 4:27-42.

14. After his encounter with the Samaritan woman, what specific lessons did Jesus apply to his disciples?

APPLY

15. Who first brought you to Jesus?
16. This woman did not deserve Jesus' kindness. Why was he so nice to her?
17. According to this passage, how does God feel when someone comes to know Him?
18. Have you discovered Jesus? And if so, are there people you need to “run back and tell?” Who? Make a list.
19. What are some things that keep us from telling others about Jesus?

What Are the Answers?

1. By Jesus' day the northern part of Israel, also known as Samaria, was comprised of an ethnically mixed people group famous for their false religion. These Samaritans hosted pagan religious services at a temple on Mount Gerizim.
2. She was likely there at that time because she was an outcast. She wasn't part of the social crowd.
3. Jesus deliberately bypassed at least three cultural barriers: (1) Rabbi's and religious leaders did not associate with immoral people. (2) No Jew had any dealings with Samaritans. (3) It also wasn't acceptable for Jewish men to talk casually to women in public.
4. "Living water," is like spring water. It was the best water of the day. It was clear running water, as opposed to stagnant sitting water. Jesus used it as an illustration of salvation
5. Discuss
6. Jesus was about to do something magnificent in her life. He had to point out her sin so that she could understand His forgiveness. "The gospel teaches us that we are far more wicked than we ever imagined, but more loved and accepted through Christ than we ever dared dream—at the same time." - John Piper
7. See "What you need to know about this passage."
8. Discuss
9. The word translated "of" more precisely means, "from" or "out of." So Jesus was telling her not only that Gerizim was an inauthentic place of worship, but also that the Savior would arise from the Jewish people. She understood what he meant. In verse 25 she said "I know that the Messiah is coming."
10. Her jaw probably dropped. She may have dropped the water jar too. In a second she's going to run off without it.
11. It's obvious that she believed. Excitement and desire to tell others are signs of authentic faith.
12. This is a theme in John's gospel. "No-one understands Jesus." (But this Samaritan woman did!)
13. Our excitement about Jesus leads us to share about Jesus. It's been that way for two millenia.
14. "Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest!" Jesus was describing the conversations they were about to have with all the Samaritans that were on their way to meet him.
15. Discuss
16. No-one deserves Jesus' kindness, but he delights to give it. That's the gospel.
17. Discuss
18. Discuss
19. Discuss

Memorize

What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

2 Timothy 2:2



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

WHO IS JESUS • Jesus Our Judge

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 5

The House of Mercy

John 5 records Jesus' first confrontation with the Jewish leaders. And it's packed with fantastic information about Jesus' relationship with His Father. The story starts in a place called The House of Bethesda, which was also called the House of Mercy.

The pool in the House of Bethesda in Jerusalem was a gathering place for invalids and crippled people. There were no hospitals in Jesus' day. This pool was a place people came seeking healing after they exhausted all their other options. Jesus went there on purpose, on a Saturday.

He selected an invalid who hadn't walked for 38 years, and healed him on the spot. And the words he used to heal him are quite important. He said, "Take up your bed and walk."

Let me ask you, what would you do if you couldn't walk for four decades then someone healed you with the words, "Take up your bed and walk?" You'd do it! You might dance, scream, call your friends, and schedule an interview eventually, but one thing is for sure from the beginning: You would take up your bed and walk.

Jesus knew how this guy would respond. He knew he would be walking with his bed for miles. And that's just what he wanted him to do.

Pharisaical Laws

In first-century Judea, Pharisees promoted a dizzying array of man-made laws which they added to the Old Testament. They also enforced these laws for the general population. Here are a few of them:

- No-one may do any type of work on the Sabbath
- No-one may walk long distances on the Sabbath
- No-one may carry a mat on the Sabbath

Jesus knew that a number of Pharisees would see the man he just healed walking with his mat and try to stop him. And then they would hear about the healing.

What's the Big Idea?

We will all face a judgment concerned with how we respond to Jesus, God's Son.

What's the Problem?

Apart from Jesus, we live lives of only temporal significance, unaware that we will one day stand before him, facing judgment.



How Dare You!

Believe it or not, by the time the Pharisees tracked this healing back to Jesus, their basic attitude was, "How dare you heal a man on the Sabbath!" No kidding. They were very steeped in their traditions. And Jesus said something even more inflammatory next.

Have You Talked to My Dad Lately?

Verses 15-18 record the topic of the conversation. Jesus told these Pharisees that God was his Father. And he went on to discuss his relationship with God the Father for the rest of this chapter.

Truly, Truly

Whenever you see Jesus beginning a sentence with the words, "Truly, truly..." lean in. He's about to say something really important. In verses 19-29, he does it three times. He's talking in this section about his relationship with his Father. He says:

(A) The Son only does things the Father does. (B) The Father loves the Son. (C) The Father shows the Son everything He's doing. (D) The Father and the Son both give life. (E) The Father has delegated judgment to the Son, (F) so that the Son's honor will increase. (G) The Father is dishonored whenever the Son is dishonored.

Can I Get a Witness?

In verses 30-47, Jesus listed several witnesses to his identity. He talked about John the Baptist, His own miracles, God the Father, and the Scriptures.

In this section, be sure to pay special attention to verses 39-40. These verses describe the Pharisees' key problem. They loved the Old Testament Scriptures, and their own traditions, but not Jesus. Jesus continued to needle them about this point by bringing up Moses in verses 46-47.

Missing Jesus is a big deal. Hebrews 10:28-29 says, "Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot....?"

Judgment

This study ends with a brief discussion of judgment. Scripture teaches that there are two primary judgments people will face in the afterlife:

One is for those who have not accepted Christ. It's called the judgment of unbelievers, and it's described in Revelation 20:11-15. A place called Hell is the destiny of those who fail to trust Christ in this life.

The other is for those who have accepted Christ. It's called the judgment of believers. You can read about it in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. This judgment functions more like an awards ceremony than a condemnation. Take a minute to look these passages up before your study.

What's Our Response?

Because Jesus is both a judge and a savior, we can trust him and live in light of eternity.

What Are the Questions?

John 5

LAUNCH

What do you think Heaven will be like?

EXPLORE

Read [John 5:1-8](#)

1. Where did this event take place? What do you think that scene was like?

Read [John 5:9-17](#)

2. Some other Jews saw the man walking with his mat. How did they respond? Why?

Read [John 5:18-23](#)

3. Jesus said, "Truly, truly I tell you..." and then he started speaking about his relationship with God his Father. Do you see any examples of the close relationship between Jesus and God his Father in this passage? Where?
4. Verse 23 says, "all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father." Is it really a big deal to dishonor Jesus? Why?
5. What are some ways that people dishonor Jesus?

Read [John 5:24-30](#)

6. What's the message Jesus has for us in his second "Truly, truly" (verse 24)? Who's the "him who sent me of vs. 30?"
7. What else in this passage stands out to you?

Read [John 5:31-47](#)

8. Some commentators call this passage a "courtroom" because Jesus cites several "witnesses" who testify on his behalf. Who are some of those witnesses?
9. Which of these "witnesses" are most compelling to you? Why do you believe in Jesus?
10. Jesus pointed out the Jews' main problem in verses 39-40. What was it?

Special Focus on Judgment:

Scripture teaches that there are two primary judgments people will face in the afterlife. One is for those who have not accepted Christ. It's called the judgment of unbelievers. We can read about it in Revelation 20:11-15. The other is the judgment of believers as recorded in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. Let's take a minute to look those passages up.

Read [Revelation 20:11-15](#)

11. Who is being judged? What role does Christ play? What is the end result of that judgment?

Read [1 Corinthians 3:10-15](#)

12. Who is being judged? What role does Christ play? What is the end result of that judgment?

APPLY

13. Do you fear or look forward to the judgment of God? Why? If you were to come face to face with God and he said, "why should I let you into heaven?" what would you say?"
14. Can you think of any reasons why you're glad that God judges evil?
15. We know that there will be no evil in Heaven, and there will be no-one there who doesn't love Jesus. What else do you suppose will be true about Heaven?
16. How might your life change if you live with more more awareness of the coming judgments of God,?
17. Check out Romans 8:17-18. What kind of people do you think will receive the biggest rewards in Heaven?

What Are the Answers?

1. There were no high-rise hospitals or nursing homes in Jesus' day. This pool served as a gathering place for invalids and crippled people who had exhausted all their other options.
2. When the Jews saw the man walking with his mat, they tried to stop him, because it was the Sabbath, and Jewish laws forbade carrying one's mat on the Sabbath.
3. See the "What Do I Need to Know About This Passage" section. These verses are packed with insights into Jesus' loving relationship with God the Father.
4. Hebrews 10:28-29 says, "Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot."
5. Discuss
6. God the Father sent Jesus. God is one in Essence, but three in Person.
7. Discuss
8. See the "What Do I Need to Know About This Passage" section.
9. Discuss
10. In all their study of the Scriptures, they missed the point of the Scriptures. They didn't know that they needed to be forgiven. They didn't know that they needed Jesus. And they respected their own teachings more than the Scriptures themselves. That's why Jesus condemned them for honoring "one another" instead of seeking the honor that comes from God (vs. 44).
11. Revelation 20:11-15 is commonly called the Great White Throne judgment. Many people believe that Christ is the One seated on the throne. Though many books are opened at this judgment, one particular book determines the destinies of those being judged. The Book of Life contains the names of all who have truly trusted Jesus.
12. In 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, the apostle Paul describes a judgment of believers at the upcoming Day of the Lord. Only people who have trusted Jesus attend this judgment, and everyone survives. Some also receive rewards.
13. We could never say enough. We are all sinful, and God necessarily punishes evil. But Jesus died for our sin, and we can escape judgment by placing our trust in him. "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21)."
14. The fact that God judges evil is very good news. Evil is not eternal. Atrocities like rape, murder, genocide, and all lesser sins will one day be things of the past.

15-17. Discuss

Memorize

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

John 5:24



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

WHO IS JESUS • The Bread of Life

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 6:1-42; 66-71

Do You Want Fries With That?

Believe it or not, in your lifetime you will probably spend about thirty-five thousand hours eating food. That's the equivalent of eight years of eating nonstop, twelve hours each day. And you know what's amazing? A few hours after that 34,999th meal, you'll be hungry again!

Context

In chapter five, Jesus made a big splash in Jerusalem. He healed a lame man and sent him into Jerusalem, prompting a discussion with the Jewish leaders. In chapter six, Jesus is going to make an even bigger splash, and this time he's not targetting the leaders. He's turning to the people. It all starts with him climbing up a hill.

John was careful to record the place and time of the scene for us. The hill he ascended was in Galilee. Today this area is called the Golan Heights. A spacious pasture spread before him. The Jewish feast of Passover was near.

The Passover and Messianic Expectation

The Feast of Passover was instituted by God Himself. You can read about it in Exodus chapters 11 and 12. The Passover celebrates the climactic plague on Egypt, the death of the firstborn sons. The night before God enacted that plague, He instructed the Israelites to sacrifice lambs as substitutions for their sons, and to spread blood from those sacrifices on the doorposts of their homes. When God struck down the firstborn sons across the land, he passed over the sons of Israel, because of those substitutionary lambs. This final plague decimated Egypt, and initiated the Exodus.

And by this spring day, as Jesus stood before a massive crowd of people, the Jews had been celebrated the Passover Feast annually for more than 1000 years. The political climate bore some resemblance to the era of the Exodus as well. The Jews longed for deliverance from Roman oppression.

What's the Big Idea?

Jesus is the Bread of Life, who truly nourishes our souls.

What's the Problem?

Instead of drawing close to God, we devote our hearts to shallow things like money and popularity.



The Crowd

In verse 2, John told us why the crowd was there. They had seen or heard about Jesus' healings. Many wanted healing for themselves. Others just wanted to see Jesus do a miracle with their own eyes. When John says, "so the men sat down, about 5000 in number," he's only listing the number of men (households). The actual number of people was 15,000-20,000.

The Perplexing Question

Keep in mind, Jesus and his disciples were in the middle of a field, standing in front of a massive crowd when he asked them, "Where can we buy food for these people to eat?" They had no cell phones, and no Burger Kings or Jimmy Johns.... Even today, with those resources, it would cost at least \$150,000 and weeks of advanced planning to feed that many people. So Andrew and Philip both spoke up.

Philip said, in effect, "we don't have enough money." Andrew said, in effect, "we don't have the resources." But of course, Jesus knew what he was going to do the whole time. He was simply drawing their attention to it.

Jesus Dodges the Crowd

You have to understand the nature of this crowd to understand this story. Pay special attention to verses 15 and 22. Once they saw this miracle, the crowd immediately tried to take Jesus by force and make him king. They wanted a political leader who could provide for them, bless the economy, and deliver them from Roman oppression. They didn't really care about his teaching. They just wanted him for what he could do for them. So Jesus dodged them. He sent the disciples away by themselves later that night while the crowd was watching then slipped away, and eventually joined them on the water.

The Nature of True Faith

Later, some members from that crowd found Jesus in Capernaum and tried to talk him into feeding them on an ongoing basis. This conversation (6:25-59) reads like an old western standoff. Jesus repeatedly invited them to believe in him. He even stated, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him who he has sent (v. 26)." But the crowd repeatedly tried to manipulate him. And they eventually said, "Sir, give us this bread always," implying that they would only believe if he agreed to provide for them first. Jesus refused to be their puppet and provide miracles-on-demand. So most of the crowd eventually left.

Things haven't changed much today. Lots of people follow Jesus when it's easy to do so, but they're quick to abandon Jesus as soon as trials or temptation hits. True believers, in contrast, cling fiercely to Jesus. Take one of the apostle John's disciples for example. His name was Polycarp. In his days, around 160 A.D., Christians were called "atheists" because they refused to worship the Roman gods. He was eighty-six years old when he was arrested by Roman soldiers and brought before a tribunal.

The Roman Proconsul tried to persuade him to deny Christ, saying, "Have respect for your old age, swear by the fortune of Caesar. Repent, and say, 'Down with the Atheists!'" But instead of criticizing his fellow believers, Polycarp looked grimly at the wicked heathen multitude in the stadium, and gesturing towards them, he said, "Down with the Atheists!" "Swear," urged the Proconsul, "reproach Christ, and I will set you free." Polycarp replied, "86 years have I have served him, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?" A few minutes later, Polycarp willingly stepped onto a pile of wood, and he was burned to death.

What's Our Response?

Because Jesus truly nourishes our souls, we can follow Him anywhere.

What Are the Questions?

John 6

LAUNCH

Have you ever been in a relationship where you felt more used than loved? Explain.

EXPLORE

Read John 6:1-15

1. How would you characterize Philip's and Andrew's response to Jesus' request?
2. Jesus obviously knew what he was about to do. Why do you think he asked his disciples for their advice?
3. How do you think the disciples felt as they gathered up all that leftover food?
4. How did the crowd respond?

Read John 6:16-21

5. Imagine that you are one of the disciples facing that storm. You've seen Jesus turn water into wine and you've seen him heal sick and lame people. Then all of the sudden you see Him walking toward you on the lake. Is your perspective of Jesus changing? How so?
6. Why do you suppose Jesus joined the disciples on the water instead of leaving with them earlier?

Read John 6:22-40

7. Why did members from the crowd sought Jesus and found him so quickly the next day? What were they after?

8. According to verses 27, how did Jesus try to redirect their thinking?
9. What promises did Jesus make in this conversation?

Read John 6:41-42

10. How did the crowd respond?

Jesus, the Bread of Life

Verses 43-58 read like a standoff. The crowd continued to ask Jesus for ongoing provision, and Jesus repeatedly told them to trust him for eternal life. At one point Jesus said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh (John 6:51)." And many people left him.

11. What's the difference between desiring Jesus for who he is and seeking him for what he can give us?

Read John 6:66-71

12. How did the apostles respond when Jesus asked them if they wanted to leave too?
13. Have you ever known anyone who stopped following Jesus? Why did they stop?

APPLY

The martyrdom of Polycarp, one of John's disciples, is well known. During his interrogation, the Roman Proconsul threatened to burn him alive. He replied, "You threaten me with fire that burns for an hour and then is extinguished, but you know nothing of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. Why are you waiting? Bring on whatever you want."

14. Why is it that some Christians are willing to die for their faith and others give in at the slightest trial or temptation?
15. Has Jesus satisfied your spiritual hunger? How?
16. When are you most tempted to deny your faith?
17. Can you think of a time when it was scary for you to follow Jesus?
18. Following Jesus doesn't always bring quick rewards. What are some of the costs of following Jesus? Why do it?

What Are the Answers?

1. Philip and Andrew did the best they could. They were polite but confused. Jesus asked an "impossible" question. This is the miracle commonly known as the Feeding of the 5000. And 5000 is just the estimate of the number of men. Women and children were also there. Most scholars estimate there were about 15,000 people altogether.
 2. Jesus was drawing attention to what he was about to do. He wanted to involve his disciples.
 3. Discuss
 4. Pay special attention to verse 15. This was a very visible miracle. And the crowd suddenly knew Jesus could not only heal people, but he could also provide food for them. The average American spends over \$150 per week on food. Add that to all your healthcare costs, and you can see why this crowd suddenly decided Jesus was going to be their king, regardless of whether he wanted the job or not.
 5. Throughout the whole book of John, the disciples are growing in their understanding of Who Jesus is.
 6. Notice the end of verse 5 as well. One reason Jesus didn't leave with the disciples is because he was avoiding the crowd.
 7. They wanted economic provision and they wanted to champion a popular king.
 8. Look at verses 27, 29, and 33. Jesus repeatedly said, "It's me you want, not another meal!"
 9. He promised eternal life! And he promised eternal satisfaction, saying, "Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and shall never thirst!" He specifically mentioned resurrection in verse 40. These are amazing promises!
 10. The crowd didn't want Jesus' promises. They just wanted him to agree to provide food for them.
 11. Loving what Jesus can give us is not the same as loving Jesus himself. If we only love what he gives us, we'll stop following him as soon as our circumstances begin to challenge our devotion.
 12. The disciples continued to grow in their understanding of Jesus, day by day.
 13. Share
Polycarp also walked willingly onto the pile of wood and prayed, "Lord sovereign God, I thank you that you have deemed me worthy of this moment..." Then he was burned alive.
 14. One reason is because not everyone who claims to be a Christian has a genuine relationship with Jesus. Being in a garage doesn't make you a car. And being in church or from a Christian family doesn't make you a Christian. Each of us must make a decision to follow Christ on our own. See Romans 10:13
- 15-18. Discuss

Memorize

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

John 6:35



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

THE MESSIAH HAS COME • Rivers of Living Water

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 7

The Feasts of Israel

The Jews hosted seven primary holidays in Jerusalem. Four occurred in the Spring and three in the Fall. Passover was the first feast of the year, and it celebrated God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt. On the second night of the Passover feast, they began to serve the Unleavened Bread which symbolized purity. The Feast of Firstfruits came right on the heels of the Passover. The Jews dedicated best of their new crops to the Lord. Several weeks later they celebrated the summer harvest with a feast called Pentecost,

Later in the Fall the Jews celebrated the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feasts of Israel

Spring	The Feast of Passover - <i>Salvation</i>
	The Unleavened Bread - <i>Purity</i>
	The Feast of Firstfruits - <i>God's Provision</i>
	The Feast of Pentecost - <i>God's Provision</i>
Fall	The Feast of Trumpets - <i>Worship</i>
	The Day of Atonement - <i>Confession</i>
	The Feast of Tabernacles - <i>Presence of the Lord</i>

The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles (also known as the Feast of Booths) was the last celebration of the year. It took place in Jerusalem each fall. As part of the festival, which lasted 8 days, the Jews erected temporary shelters all over the city and the hill called the Mount of Olives. The shelters served as reminders of the days of Moses when Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years. The festival included a lot of singing and dancing and a tremendous feast. For the first seven days, 70 bulls were offered for the nations of the world but everything built toward the last day, when 1 bull was offered for Israel.

What's the Big Idea?

Everyone is challenged by the claims of Jesus.

What's the Problem?

We often view Jesus as a great leader or teacher, but miss the fact that he is the Messiah of God.



The Ceremony at the Feast of Tabernacles

The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles was the greatest day of the celebration. Early in the morning on that day the chief priest led a procession from the altar in Jerusalem down to the pool of Siloam. Once he got there he filled a golden pitcher with water then headed back toward the temple. The masses waved palm branches and cheered him on. Three series of trumpet blasts announced his arrival into the city. When he entered the Temple area, he circled the altar seven times before ascending it. Once atop the altar, he poured out the water at the base of the altar signifying that the nation was still in bondage and waiting for the messiah. Then he raised his hand and the priests began singing choruses which the people repeated. "Oh Lord, send salvation" "Oh Lord, bring prosperity" "Oh give thanks to the Lord."

It was at this point in the Feast that Jesus cried out "If anyone is still thirsty let him come to me and drink! Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water!'"

With this announcement, Jesus formally presented Himself as the Messiah to Israel, and he stunned the crowd. Some people believed in him. Others called him a prophet. The Pharisees and their guards stumbled all over themselves, and a controversy arose.

Many people knew that Jesus was from Galilee and the Messiah was supposed to be born in Bethlehem. These people didn't know, of course, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and only moved to Galilee later in his life.

This is another passage where we see Nicodemus, an elite Pharisee and member of the ruling Sanhedrin, continue to wrestle with the identity of Jesus. But many of the other Jewish leaders were too prideful to believe in Jesus and they were jealous of his popularity. They copied the crowd, saying "a prophet does not come from Galilee." Sometimes people grasp at anything they can to deny the truth regarding Jesus.

A Great Opportunity

The Apply Section of this study starts off with the questions, "What are some of the different opinions of Jesus today? What are some reasons people give for not believing in him?" Try to use these questions to surface any doubts people in your group have about Jesus, the Bible, or faith in general. You don't need to know the answers. Just take some notes.

Then do a little research between this week and next. Consider using the websites suggested on the next page. You might choose to discuss the topics further with individuals or your whole group.

This is a great opportunity because there are great answers to every question about the Christian faith. Consider the journey of Lee Strobel. Lee Strobel graduated from Yale Law school and worked for 14 years as a research journalist for the Chicago Tribune. He was also a strong atheist. So it initially bugged him when his wife Leslie came to Christ. But over time, he saw an attractive change in her character. He began to research the Christian faith. As a world-renowned journalist, he had access to all the leading people in the fields of science, philosophy, history, and more. And the more research he did, the more he became convinced of the truth of Christianity. Over time, he gave his heart to Christ. You can read his research yourself in his best selling books entitled The Case for Christ, The Case for a Creator, and The Case for Faith.

What's Our Response?

You will want your group to understand that many people are confused about Jesus, and it's important to know who he really is.

What Are the Questions?

John 7

LAUNCH

Do you remember when you first heard about Jesus? When did He become meaningful to you?

EXPLORE

Read 7:1-13.

1. Why were Jesus' brothers urging him to go to the feast? What do they assume about Jesus' motivation? Why?
2. Sometimes believers face opposition or ridicule for their faith from family members. Do you know anyone who has been in that situation? How does this passage encourage you?
3. According to verses 12-13, what rumors were circulating in Jerusalem about Jesus?
4. Why do you think Jesus waited to go to Jerusalem until later?

Read 7:14-36.

5. The Feast of Tabernacles was the climax of all the feasts of Israel, and Jesus went right into the Temple and started teaching. How did people receive at first?
6. How did people receive him later? Why did many believe in him?
7. Did the people understand Jesus' statement in vs. 33-34? What was Jesus talking about? Where was he going?

The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles lasted 8 days. Seventy bulls were sacrificed for the nations on the first 7 days, and one special bull was sacrificed for Israel on the 8th. An elaborate ceremony accompanied this special day. The High Priest marched into the city amidst trumpet blasts and cheering crowds. He was carrying a golden pitcher. But when he ascended the altar, he poured the offering out beside the altar, instead of on it. This act symbolized the nation's prayers, and the fact that they were still awaiting the coming Messiah.

Read 7:37-52

8. What did Jesus cry out at this point in the ceremony? How did the crowd react?
9. Look back at the whole chapter. What are the various ways that people reacted to Jesus?
10. What are some of the different opinions of Jesus today?
11. Why did the temple guards report back without apprehending Jesus?
12. Nicodemus, a top Jewish leader, argued for a fair trial for Jesus. How did the rest of the leaders respond? Why did it matter where Jesus was from?

APPLY

13. What are some of the different opinions of Jesus today? What are some reasons people give for not believing in him?
14. Have you ever seen someone grasp at anything they can grab in an effort to avoid Jesus? When?
15. Are there people in your life who discourage your belief in Jesus? How so?
16. Why do you believe in Jesus?

What Are the Answers?

1. Jesus' "brothers" were actually his half-brothers. Jesus was born only of Mary, and these brothers were born later as children of Mary and Joseph. Jesus had four brothers overall. - James, Joseph (Joses), Simon and Judas (not the same Judas who betrayed Jesus). Jesus' brothers did not initially believe in him. In this passage they told Jesus he needed to be visible if he wanted to be a political leader. But at least two of his brothers came to faith later. James became the leader of the first Christian church in Jerusalem- see Acts 15:6,13. He wrote the N.T. book of James. Judas (again- not Jesus' betrayer) wrote the N.T. book of Jude.
2. Discuss
- .. By this time, there were a wide variety of opinions about Jesus. Some people thought he was a good man, others thought he was a prophet, and some knew him to be the Messiah. Others thought he was a false teacher or an evil man. This passage just summarizes the various positions.
4. Jesus said, "It is not my time" to his brothers. But his time came soon after his brothers left. He obviously didn't want to go to Jerusalem with them.
5. At first they said, "You have a demon" and "Who is trying to kill you?" They didn't know that Jewish leaders were plotting to kill him.
6. See vs. 26-31. Some people were beginning to believe in him.
7. Nope, they didn't understand. Jesus was speaking about his death, when he would go back to Heaven to be with his Father.
8. This ceremony was Israel's way of asking God to send the Messiah. Jesus basically said, "Here I am."
9. Jesus' brothers seemed to think he was an ambitious political leader. Some people said he had a demon. Some believed he was the Christ, or The Prophet like Moses - another name for the Christ. Still others considered him a criminal or a charlatan.
10. Discuss
11. They found him too credible.
12. Most of the leaders didn't want to give Jesus a fair hearing. People understood that the Messiah was supposed to come from Bethlehem. And of course, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. More importantly, however, he has always existed. He is the λογος (logos) of God (John 1).

Questions 13-16.

Use these questions to surface reasons people don't believe in Jesus. You may encounter some common arguments like "the problem of evil" or "how can there be just one way." If so, take notes. You don't have to have all the answers. But in just a few minutes you can find great articles on all these topics at websites like the ones listed to the right.

Memorize

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

John 7:37-38

On Apologetics

The word "Apologetics" does not mean "an apology." It's related to the Greek word απολογία. It means, "a rational defense of the Christian faith."

7 great Apologetic websites

www.everystudent.com
this sight has great articles and connects you with staff members who can answer questions.

www.carm.org
click on "Questions" then "Skeptics Ask"

www.reasonablefaith.org
click on "Writings" then "Popular Articles"

www.probe.org
check out the first article, entitled "Reasons to Believe"

www.apologetics315.com
check out the list of topics on the left

www.leestrobels.com
use the search bar

www.bethinking.org
easy-to-find topics and articles

Cru.Comm is the small group material for Campus Crusade for Christ's Campus Ministry. It was created by Centerfield Productions, the field based division of CruPress. We'd love to hear your feedback on this study. Please write us at centerfield@uscm.org



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

A PUBLIC REVELATION • Conversion

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 9

Dancing to the Music of the Gospel

Keith Johnson, a national leader with Cru, often compares the gospel to music, and the Christian life to dancing. Not everyone hears the music, but those who do hear it can't stand still. They all start dancing. And, of course, some people dance better than others. If you haven't already read John 9, stop right now and read it. It's a fantastic story.

Jesus Sends a Man In

By this point in the Book of John, Jesus has already presented himself to the nation formally. He knew that the religious leaders of the day would not accept him. That was part of his plan. Now he's beginning to challenge them directly. And he does it as only He can!

Background

In the ancient world, people often believed that sickness and tragedies were the result of sin. And of course, that's often the case. There are plenty of diseases and tragedies we can avoid by making wise choices. But that's not always the case! Everyone suffers, and some suffer more than others. Imagine being born blind.

John points out that the word "Siloam" means "sent." The Pool of Siloam symbolically meant deliverance to the Jews. Jesus is sending this guy ahead of him in order to create a stir. By going and washing the man encountered other people who witnessed the miracle. Eventually those people drew the attention of the Pharisees.

Tenacity

Always pay close attention to dialogue when you read narrative portions of the Bible. The guy Jesus healed in this passage experienced a life-changing miracle. He's just a common guy. But notice how he completely overwhelms the learned Pharisees.

What's the Big Idea?

When we come to Jesus we experience a powerful transformation.

What's the Problem?

Apart from Jesus, we're enslaved by our blindness and guilt.



Jesus' Illustration

In his grace, Jesus used this blind man as an illustration, and this whole passage turns on that illustration. Jesus sent a blind man in because the Pharisees were blind themselves.

When Jesus frees us from our sin and gives us new life, we're just like this blind man. For the first time, we begin to see! Before closing this study, you might want to discuss John Newton and the hymn entitled *Amazing Grace*, or Lecrae's testimony at www.iamsecond.com/seconds/lecræ/.

Was Blind But Now I See

John Newton was eleven years old when he began sailing with his dad, a shipmaster for England. And he eventually became a slave trader. For years he engaged in the despicable practice of capturing men and women in West Africa to be sold as slaves in markets around the world.

But God intervened in his life. Newton encountered a tremendous storm on one of his journeys, and he began to read a Christian book. God used that book to lead him to repentance. Newton eventually left the slave trade and became a minister. Years later he wrote a pamphlet entitled "Thoughts About the Slave Trade" that rocked Europe. His work, alongside that of William Wilberforce and many others, led to the eradication of slavery in the western world.

Newton also had an effective ministry as a preacher and a hymnologist. He never ceased to marvel at the grace of God. You may already be familiar with his most famous hymn, *Amazing Grace*.

Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found, **was blind but now I see.**

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

Thru many dangers, toils and snares I have already come; 'tis grace
hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me; His word my hope secures; He
will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the
sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first
began.

What's Our Response?

Jesus shines in the hearts of those who come to him, and they serve as instruments of his grace.

What Are the Questions?

John 9

LAUNCH

What difference has Jesus made in your life?

EXPLORE

Read 9:1-12.

1. How did Jesus' disciples view the relationship between sickness and sin?
2. Can you think of any diseases that are the result of sin?
3. What was Jesus' view of the blind man's condition?
4. Jesus called himself the "Light of the World." What did he mean by that?
5. Why do you think Jesus went through the process of making mud and telling the man to go wash, instead of simply healing him instantly?
8. Once the miracle became undeniable, how did the Pharisees respond? What did they say about Jesus?
9. Have you seen people be skeptical about the power of God's grace? When?
10. How would you chart the blind man's emotions? How did his emotions change as he went from being healed and seeing for the first time in his life to testifying before the Pharisees and then finally to facing rejection by the Pharisees?
11. Was the healed man afraid of the Pharisees? Why or why not?

Read 9:13-34

6. How did the Pharisees respond to this miracle? What reasons did they give?
7. Why do you suppose they sent for the man's parents? How did the man's parents respond? Why? Why did they ultimately defer to their son?
12. Why did Jesus seek out the healed man later? How did he respond?
13. What type of blindness was Jesus speaking of in verses 39-41?

Look up 2 Corinthians 4:4-6

14. What is this passage describing? Who, according to these passages, is truly blind?

APPLY

15. Have you been encouraged by this passage? How so?
16. This blind man's story is not unique. Jesus can transform anyone, even slave traders like John Newton, into instruments of His grace. Has God transformed you? How?
17. Salvation has been described as "coming into the light." What are some ways that unbelievers are blind? What are some things true Christians see?
18. Are you as passionate about what God has done in your life as this blind man? Why or why not?

What Are the Answers?

1. Jesus' disciples obviously thought that this man's blindness was the result of someone's sin. We don't think that way much today.
2. There are tons of examples of diseases that relate to poor choices: Alcoholism often leads to cirrhosis of the liver, Sexual sins spread STDs, etc.
3. Jesus' statement that "neither this man nor his parents sinned" doesn't mean that they were sinless but that the man's blindness was not the direct result of some specific sin they did.
4. This is the first clue to the meaning of this passage. Jesus is the Light of the World. We are all blind. But he can enable us to see. This theme develops throughout the passage.
5. We don't know all the reasons Jesus healed him this way. But Jesus is obviously sending this guy ahead of him in order to create a stir, and to get the attention of the Pharisees.
6. Again, the Pharisees value their traditions more than Jesus' obvious miracles. They were opposed to Jesus.
7. The parents obviously thought their son was competent to speak for himself.
8. Discuss
9. Discuss
10. What a journey! He was blind his whole life. Imagine the joy and wonder of seeing for the first time! And then he was astounded by the Pharisees, who seemed not to see Jesus for who he was. Then he rebuked them and got thrown out of the community. But then he met and worshipped Jesus face to face!
 11. Discuss
 12. Jesus revealed himself to him again, and he came to a better understanding of who Jesus is. He originally called Jesus a prophet. But now he's worshipping him.
 13. This is the theme of the whole passage. Jesus is the Light of the World. We are all blind. But he can enable us to see.
 14. Notice that this blindness is not blindness of the eyes. It's blindness of the heart. The apostle Paul referenced Genesis 1 in this passage. When we come to God through Jesus, we experience new life. It's like God shines a light in our hearts and we begin to understand Jesus for how awesome he is.
 15. Discuss
 16. This is a great place to share about John Newton, or to watch Lecrae's testimony at www.iamsecond.com.
 17. Christ, most importantly, and God's love, His providence, etc.
 18. Discuss

Memorize

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts.

2 Corinthians 4:6a



A PUBLIC PLOCLAMATION • Resurrection

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 11-12:3

Death

Death has plagued humanity ever since the Garden of Eden. It separates us from people we love and looms over our own lives like an intimidating spirit. In this chapter we'll see how Jesus reached out to a family struggling with the pain of death. He will show us why we need never fear death again.

The Story Begins

The movie *Mission Impossible III* starts with an intense scene. Tom Cruise is begging a man not to kill a girl. After that scene, the movie begins. Then, an hour and a half into the movie, we see that scene again. But now we understand it, because we know who is bound, who the bad guy is, and what's at stake.

John 11 starts with an intense scene as well. A woman named Mary is anointing Jesus' feet with fantastically expensive ointment and using her hair to dry them. We won't know who she is, or why she was there until John 12:3.

Verses 1-16 No-one Understands Jesus

The town of Bethany was only 1.7 miles from Jerusalem, and Jesus' disciples didn't want to go back there because of prior attempts on his life. They had no idea what Jesus was going to do.

When Jesus got news that Lazarus was sick, he immediately said, "This illness does not result in death" but then he waited two days. After those two days, he said "Let us go to Judea... Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep." Jesus waited until Lazarus was dead before beginning his trip. His disciples misunderstood him, even though he had already told them that Lazarus' illness would not end in death. That's reasonable, considering the fact that Lazarus was, in fact, dead.

Verses 17-32

Before Jesus got to the village, Martha came out to meet him. Notice how she greeted him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Then she called for her sister Mary. She greeted Jesus with the exact same words. They'd sent for Jesus. And he didn't come in time.

Notice how Jesus interacted with Martha and Mary. He was deeply moved in his spirit, and he wept. Even though he knew what he was going to do, he shared in their suffering.

What's the Big Idea?

Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

What's the Problem?

We are often overwhelmed by tragedies.



Resurrection

When Jesus greeted Martha, he said, "Your brother will rise again." And this isn't the first time Jesus had talked about resurrection. In John 5:26-29 he taught:

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Moreover, Martha was Jewish, and Jews in the first century commonly believed in a future resurrection. But Jesus wasn't satisfied with Martha's response. He had more in store for her. He told her to focus on him, saying, "'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?'"

"Lazarus, Come Out!"

Jesus went directly to the tomb. If you read the story carefully, you'll see that Jesus never even went to Mary and Martha's home. He went straight to the grave. Rabbis at this time taught that the spirit of a person hovered around his dead body for up to three days, trying to get back in, but departed permanently when the first sign of decomposition began. As Jesus approached the tomb that day, Lazarus' diseased, dead body had been entombed for four days. He paused for a short, public prayer. He wanted everyone there to understand that he is the Son of God. Then, with three words, he rose Lazarus from the dead.

The Aftermath

Verses 45-54 record the response of the Pharisees and Chief Priests. In a backroom they discussed the momentum for Jesus all over Judea. They felt threatened by Jesus, and they wanted him out of the way.

In contrast, (12:1-3), Jesus was enjoying a memorable meal with loved ones. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus finally got Jesus in their home. Martha served as Jesus talked with his friend Lazarus at the table. And Mary, moved to worship him, anointed his feet with perfume, and even wiped them with her hair.

What's Our Response?

You want to inspire your group with this story about Jesus' power over the grave, and encourage them to trust him in the midst of trials and temptations.

What Are the Questions?

John 11:12:3

LAUNCH

Have you ever had a family member or friend die? Did that death cause you to question God's love? Share if you can.

EXPLORE

Read 11:1-16.

1. How did Jesus respond when he learned that one of his friends was ill?
2. What prompted him to finally go to Bethany?
3. If Jesus loved Lazarus, why did he wait two days to help him?
4. What does verse 15 tell us about Jesus' purposes?

Read 11:17-27.

5. Did Martha have faith, doubt, or a mixture of both in this passage? How so?
6. Jesus said, "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." What kind of life and death was Jesus referring to? How should Christ's statement alter our views of life and death?
7. How did Mary greet Jesus?
8. Do you see any evidence of Jesus' love for this family in this passage?

9. Jesus obviously knew what he was going to do, so why was he so deeply moved by Mary's grief?

10. What was the response of the crowd?

11. Where did all these events take place?

Read 11:38-44.

10. Imagine being at this scene. What would you think and feel?

11. If you were one of the disciples and you saw this happen, how do you think you would have reacted?

Read 11:45-55.

12. What are the various ways that people responded to this event?

Read John 12:1-3

13. In addition to the joy of having their brother back, what hope did this miracle give Mary and Martha? What hope does it give you and me?

14. Now consider question 3 again. Why do you think Jesus waited those two days?

APPLY

15. Have you ever felt abandoned by God in a great time of need?

16. Someone once said, "We don't always know all of God's purposes, but we can always take rest in His character." Do you agree? Why or why not?

17. Tombs were unclean places but Jesus went straight there and brought redemption. Where can he bring redemption to you?

18. How does knowing the power of Jesus to raise the dead impact the way you live your life?

What Are the Answers?

1. Jesus said, "This sickness will not lead to death." But then he waited until Lazarus died!
2. It appears that Jesus supernaturally knew when Lazarus died. As soon as that happened, he began to move toward the town of Bethany.
3. Discuss
4. Jesus wants those who follow him to believe in him and to trust in his power.
5. Martha had a mixture of faith and doubt. She believed in a future resurrection. She may have heard Jesus talk about that before. But she didn't expect Jesus to raise Lazarus on that day. She blamed him for being too late. And she warned him about the smell of the tomb.
6. There are two different Greek words for life. One is βίος. It implies existence and growth. We get the word biology from βίος. But the Greek word ζωή means more than that. It implies transcendent life. That's the word Jesus used here. It's the same word he uses in John 10:10. In this passage, Jesus is talking about eternal, meaningful life.
7. Mary and Marth both greeted Jesus in the same way. See vs. 21 and 32.
8. See vs. 5, 33-38, etc. Jesus loved them.
9. Jesus loved them, and he shared in their grief, even though he was about to bring great joy.
10. Discuss
11. Discuss
12. Martha and Mary rejoiced because of Jesus! Many Jews believed in Jesus. The Jewish leaders felt threatened by Jesus and determined to kill him.
13. This is an important question. Martha and Mary got Lazarus back, but they got much more too! They understood Jesus for Who He is. That's what Jesus was after all along.
14. Jesus didn't want to just heal Lazarus. He wanted to resurrect him from the dead. He wanted everyone to know his resurrection power.
15. Discuss
16. Discuss
17. Discuss
18. Discuss

Memorize

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." Do you believe this?

John 11:25-26



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD • The Holy Spirit

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 15:26-16:33

On the Way to the Cross

You may remember that the book of John divides into two parts: The Book of Signs, chapters 1-11, covers three years of Jesus' ministry. The Book of the Hour, chapters 12-21, covers the last week of Jesus' life.

At this point in our study, Jesus is already in Jerusalem. He has celebrated the passover feast with his disciples in the city, and one of his followers, named Judas Iscariot, has left to betray him. Jesus, knowing what lay before him, took time to share some final words with his followers.

He taught them about service and the nature of true leadership (chapter 13). He talked about Heaven and told them to always abide in him (chapter 14). He also talked a lot about the Holy Spirit (chapters 14-16).

The Trinity

God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit compose the Godhead, or the three Persons of God. God is one in essence (see, e.g. John 10:38, Deuteronomy 6:4 and Mark 12:29). And He is also composed of three distinct persons: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Way back in the second century, a Christian leader coined the term Trinity to describe the Godhead. Of course, our language and understanding cannot fully capture who God is. The study of God's identity is called Theology Proper.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third Member of the Trinity. He is not an impersonal force. He has all the attributes of personhood (intellect, emotion, and will). But He is also divine. Like God the Father and Jesus, He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresent (Psalm 135:7), omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10), and omnipotent (Job 33:4). He inspired the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:21) and played a role in creation (Genesis 1:2).

And He plays a number of special roles in the lives of believers. He guides, directs, and empowers us as we follow God. In the Old Testament era, the Spirit empowered Samson with great strength, David with strength and skill, prophets with knowledge of the future, and many others.

The Spirit began a new era in the Biblical story when He came to empower believers in Acts 3. That event, called Pentecost, initiated the era known as the Church age. That's the era we live in now.

What's the Big Idea?

We can draw close to God and experience all that He has through us through the power of His Spirit.

What's the Problem?

We're naturally sinful and we live lives of independence from God.



The Presence

The Spirit **indwells** all true believers. Ephesians 1:13–14 (ESV) states:

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

The word "sealed" was a familiar one to Paul's original audience. Roman officials would drip wax onto letters or important documents and imprint that wax with a ring. This procedure announced the authority and importance of the letter and protected it from any tampering. Every believer is likewise protected by God's Spirit.

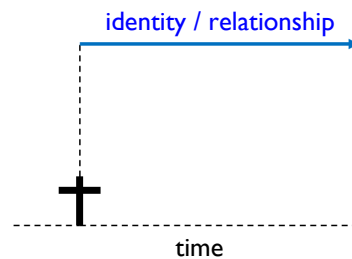
The Power

And the Spirit also **fills** believers. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul commanded his audience to be filled with the Spirit. Being indwelled is not the same as being filled. There is one indwelling, but there are many fillings. To be filled with the Spirit is to be directed and empowered by the Spirit.

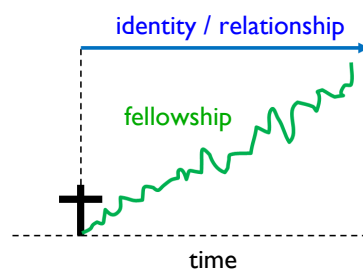
To make room for the King of Kings in our life, we must, in Dr. Bright's words, "prepare the throne." We cannot be directed and empowered by the Spirit if we are directing our own lives ourselves. We must confess our sins and offer control of our lives to Christ. Independence is a great American concept, but it's not a Christian ideal. We draw close to God by surrendering to God. He knows how to run our lives much better than we do.

The difference between God's presence and God's power in our lives is often illustrated with a simple diagram.

The moment a person comes to Christ, their identity and relationship with God changes instantly. That person becomes a child of God.



But relationship doesn't always imply intimacy. Sin and independence from God bring a lack of intimacy. A person grows closer to God over time as they confess sins and trust Him with more and more of their life.



We don't have to earn God's favor. We couldn't if we tried. But as His children we can draw close to Him through confession, obedience, and surrender. Encourage your group to confess their sins and surrender their lives to Him.

What's Our Response?

Lead your group in a discussion about the Holy Spirit and encourage them to confess their sins and surrender their lives to Him.

What Are the Questions?

John 15:26-16:33

LAUNCH

What are some of the characteristics of close relationships?

EXPLORE

Today we're entering a new era in the ministry of Jesus. He has entered Jerusalem and he's planning to give his life on behalf of mankind. He is also preparing his disciples for his departure. He made them a significant promise. He told them that the Holy Spirit would soon come in power.

Read 15:26-6:4

1. According to verse 26, how will the Holy Spirit and Jesus' disciples continue the ministry begun by Jesus?
2. What kind of treatment will those disciples endure from those who do not know Christ?
3. Do we ever face persecution in our society for following Jesus? If so, how?

Read 16:5-15.

4. What can we learn about how the disciples were feeling from verses 6 and 12? Why were they so sad?
5. How did Jesus comfort them?
6. According to this passage, Who is the Holy Spirit?

Special Focus: The Holy Spirit

7. Turn to **2 Corinthians 1:21-22**. What do you learn about the Holy Spirit? Is this comforting? Why?
8. Now read **Ephesians 4:30** and **Galatians 5:25**. What do you learn about the Holy Spirit from these passages? Does this make sense? Why?
9. Check out **Ephesians 5:18-20**. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

Read 15:16-33

10. Did the disciples understand what Jesus was saying?
11. What does it mean to ask God for something "in Jesus' name?"
12. What did Jesus mean when he said, "A time will come when you will be scattered"?
13. Jesus knew that when the Holy Spirit comes to empower the disciples (Acts 3), they will no longer hide but will proclaim Jesus boldly. Have you ever had a chance to share your faith in Jesus?

APPLY

In a booklet entitled How to Be Filled With the Holy Spirit, Bill Bright tells a story about a sheep herder in a west Texas town named Ira Yates. During the Depression era Yates progressively lost business and became impoverished. But then a seismographic company asked if they could drill an oil well on his land. The first well struck a huge oil reservoir that produced 80,000 barrels per day. That's \$2.5 million per day. Many more wells followed. Yates owned it all. He was a billionaire. He just didn't know it.

14. God has given us all we need to live fruitful lives for Him. Yet we fall short. How have you grieved the Spirit lately? Is there anything you need to confess and correct?
15. How can you "keep in step" with the Spirit?
16. Would you like for God to direct you and empower you?

What Are the Answers?

1. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come in power after his departure. He called Him the Helper and the Spirit of Truth.
2. The disciples were about to go through some serious suffering.
3. Discuss
4. They were sad. Jesus told them he was going to leave them.
5. Jesus actually said it was better for them that he go away, because then he would send the Holy Spirit. Instead of Jesus' physical presence on Earth, the Spirit would come and be present on Earth in a special way.
6. Jesus called Him the Helper, and the Spirit of Truth. Jesus promised that He would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. That includes everything bad, good, and all that's coming.
7. The Spirit lives in all believers individually. This has implications for how we treat our bodies and how we treat others. See 1 Cor. 6:17-20 and 1 Cor. 12.
8. Paul counsels us not to grieve the Spirit by continuing in sin, and to keep in step with the Spirit by following God. This makes sense because this is what we observe. Christians can either walk with God or disobey.
9. A person who is filled with the Holy Spirit is directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
10. Yes and no. They understood that Jesus was leaving the world and going back to God the Father. But they didn't know how tough that would be or what was coming next.
11. To ask in Jesus' name means to desire the same things Jesus desires and to ask God the Father for them. Because of Jesus' death for our sin and resurrection, we can draw close to God in Jesus' name. And God will answer every prayer that aligns with His perfect will.
12. Soon Jesus will be arrested, and the disciples will flee in all directions.
13. Discuss
14. Living a fruitful life for God isn't about us getting more of Him. It's about Him getting more of us. We can offer God more of us by confessing known sins, surrendering ungodly ambitions, and offering our lives to Him. You might give your group a few minutes of personal time to pray, and then regather.
15. Discuss
16. End in prayer.

Memorize

And do not get drunk on wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18

Read it!

You can access Bill Bright's fantastic little booklet entitled [How You Can Be Filled With the Holy Spirit](#), and other resources at:

www.cru.org/training-and-growth/classics/transferable-concepts

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KILLING THE SON OF GOD • Substitution

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 18-19:30

Introduction

Today we will look at the night of Jesus' arrest and trial. The book of John and the other gospels record enough details that we can piece together how that night went. Due to the chaotic political environment of the day Jesus faced three different judges and endured both torture and humiliation before eventually being convicted and sentenced to death by crucifixion.

The Arrest

After telling Judas, "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus went somewhere Judas could easily find him. The word Gethsemane means an olive grove. This olive grove had a walled enclosure Jesus used regularly. And when Judas came with various Roman and Jewish officials, Jesus stepped out in the open toward them. Some officials staggered back and fell down when Jesus disclosed himself with the words, "I am." These are the words the Lord spoke to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:15.

The Trials

Understanding a little bit of background will help you make sense of this night. In A.D. 6, the Romans installed a man named Annas as the High Priest of Israel. They removed him in A.D. 15 but five of his sons and his son-in-law Caiaphus served in the position after him. On the night Jesus was betrayed, Caiaphus was the proper High Priest, but Annas still controlled the priesthood. That's why, after arresting Jesus, the Jewish leaders took him to Annas first. That's also why both Annas and Caiaphus are called "High Priest" in verses 19-24.

Jewish law forbade the priests from questioning the accused. But that didn't stop Annas. He tried to get Jesus to say something he could use against him and his followers. Jesus didn't answer his questions. Then Annas sent him to Caiaphus.

Mark 14:53-65 tells us what happened between Jesus and Caiaphus. At one point the High Priest asked Jesus directly, "Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of the Blessed." And Jesus said, "I am." But he didn't stop there. He added, "And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven!"

It's not really appropriate to call Jesus' tribunals before Annas and Caiaphus trials, there was no presumption of innocence and Jesus did not employ a lawyer. These first two trials were convened simply to find adequate charges so they could sentence Jesus to death.

What's the Big Idea?

Jesus courageously gave His life in order to save mankind from sin and death.

What's the Problem?

We are sinful, and we can deny Jesus with our words and actions.



Having convicted him of blasphemy, the Jews took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman Prefect. Ironically, the Jews asked Pilate to come out of his residence because they didn't want to defile themselves. Their law prohibited them from entering a Gentile's home.

Pilate wasn't interested in Jewish theological controversies. So the Jews spoke in terms he could understand. They told him that Jesus was trying to lead a rebellion. Pilate's discussion with Jesus convinced him that the Jews' charge of rebellion was hogwash, but he didn't care. He allowed them to prevail and sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion.

Peter

Peter tried to defend Jesus during his arrest. He swung a sword at the head of a guard and cut off his ear. Jesus healed the ear (Luke 22:51), rebuked him, and went with the guards. Peter and John followed at a distance.

Then, notice how the author portrays what happened next. He contrasts Jesus' faithfulness with Peter's failings. Jesus boldly refused to answer Annas and implicate his followers. Jesus boldly told Caiaphus exactly who he was. And Jesus didn't try to convince Pilate to let him go. In contrast, Peter lied three times, denying that he even knew Jesus. John doesn't mention the specifics. Peter denied Jesus vehemently. This night's events caught him completely off guard and overwhelmed him.

The Crucifixion

John 19:17-30 records Jesus' crucifixion and death. Some have described crucifixion as a form of state terror. The Romans knew how to squash rebellions. In 71 B.C., they crucified 6000 rebels led by Spartacus along the road from Rome to Capua.

The Reason Christ Died

Theologians use the phrase Substitutionary Atonement to describe Christ's death on our behalf. Death is the penalty for sin. So Christ died for us to free us from that penalty. Romans 5:8 says that God demonstrates His love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Perhaps Isaiah said it best:

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 5:5-6).

Call it Sin, Call it Forgiven, Call on God to Change Me

Christ's death on our behalf is the ground and essence of the Christian faith. We don't have to clean ourselves up to earn God's favor. We could never do that. But we can come to God as we are, because Christ died for us.

Walking with God reflects that reality. When a believer sins, he or she can confess the sin (call it sin), remember that Christ died for our sins, (call it forgiven) and submit afresh to the Lord (call on God to change me). That's a great little saying to remember. *Call it sin. Call it forgiven. And Call on God to Change Me.*

What's Our Response?

It's helpful to dwell on why Jesus courageously gave his life for us. It's also important to know how to deal with sin as believers who are seeking to follow Jesus.

What Are the Questions?

John 18-19

LAUNCH

Can you name any of Jesus' miracles from the Bible? If you could be there to see one, which would you choose?

EXPLORE

Read [John 18:1-14](#).

1. Why do you think Jesus went to a familiar place where Judas could easily find him?
2. When the soldiers said they were seeking Jesus, he replied, "I am." Why? What happened next?
3. What words would you use to describe Peter's response?

Read [John 18:15-27](#).

4. In your opinion, was Peter courageous, cowardly, or both? Where were the rest of the disciples?

Check out [Matthew 26:2-4](#).

5. This passage describes what's been going on at Caiaphas' place in the last 24 hours. What are the chances that Jesus is going to get a fair trial there?

Check out [Mark 14:55-65](#).

6. What stands out to you from this trial before Caiaphas? How did they try to convict him?
7. When Caiaphas finally spoke to Jesus, how did he respond?

Read [John 18:28-19:16](#).

8. Why did the Jewish leaders restrain from entering Pilate's palace? Do you see any irony in their behavior?
9. Roman trials followed four steps: An accusation, an interrogation, a defense and a verdict. Can you trace each step through verses 28-40?
10. How did Pilate react when he realized the Jews wanted Jesus dead for claiming to be God? Why?

Read [John 19:17-30](#).

11. Why do you admire Jesus for how he acted throughout this whole ordeal?
12. Why did Jesus have to die?
13. Describe everything Peter did on this fateful night. Describe his emotional journey.
14. Peter once boasted that he would never abandon Jesus. How do you think he felt after this night?

APPLY

15. How does Jesus' death touch you?
16. Why is it important to remember why Jesus died?
17. Can you think of a time when it's been easiest to deny Jesus?
18. What is a believer supposed to do when he sins?

What Are the Answers?

1. Jesus wasn't trying to evade his arrest.
2. When Jesus said, "I am," He was using the name that the Lord spoke to Moses from the burning bush in Exodus 3:14. His words and his presence evidently startled the guards.
3. Peter swung at a soldier's head but only got an ear. Jesus stopped the fighting and healed the ear (Luke 22:51). He didn't want or need Peter's help. Around 600 guards were present to arrest Jesus that night. Twelve legions of angels would be 72,000 angels.
4. Peter was completely misguided. He was both courageous and cowardly. Peter and John tried to follow Jesus. The others fled.
5. Discuss
6. The purpose of the trials was to find some legal basis to condemn Jesus to death. Judas' testimony would have been crucial to their case but he was nowhere to be found. Several false witnesses volunteered but their testimonies didn't agree. Finally two said that Jesus had once threatened the temple, based on a statement Jesus had made 3 years earlier (John 2:19).
7. Notice how bold Jesus was when they asked him if he was the Christ. You might check out Daniel 7:13-14, and Psalm 101.
8. They didn't want to become unclean by entering a Gentile's home - on the night that they were murdering the Son of God.
9. Discuss
10. The Jews pressured Pilate for a conviction but they weren't able to give him any evidence. Initially he refused, but he eventually agreed and assigned Jesus to crucifixion.
11. Jesus was not intimidated by Annas, Caiaphas, or Pilate. He boldly proclaimed the truth about his identity. He refused to implicate his followers. He took care of his mother. He suffered willingly.
12. Jesus did all this on purpose. He endured the suffering and shame and execution for us. Mankind is sinful (Romans 3:23) and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). And Jesus willingly paid that penalty for us (Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 5:21).
13. Discuss
14. Peter wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75).
15. Discuss
16. When we forget why Jesus died, we forget his love and we fail to take sin seriously.
17. Discuss
18. Keep "Short Accounts" See the sidebar.

Memorize

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 (NASB)

Keep Short Accounts

Everybody sins. Even believers. But mature believers know what to do to restore fellowship with God after they sin.

1. Call it Sin

Step one in restoring fellowship with God is specific confession. We must agree with God concerning our sinful choices, whether they be attitudes, beliefs, or actions. It's best to state the sin specifically.

2. Call it Forgiven

But then we get to acknowledge that Jesus died for our sins (even the most recent one) and he has *already* forgiven us.

3. Call on God to Change Me

Lastly, ask God for strength. Submit to Him again and ask Him to fill you with His Spirit, so that you don't repeat the same mistakes.



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

PROPELLED BY LOVE • Courage

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 21

Introduction

Several of Jesus' followers watched his crucifixion from a distance. And several things started happening as soon as he died. The darkness covering the land began to lift. An earthquake shook Jerusalem and the curtain in the Temple was torn in two. Some graves cracked open due to the earthquake. Matthew even records that a number of dead people emerged from those graves alive again, like Lazarus (Matthew 27:55).

Two secret followers emerged as well. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both members of the Sanhedrin (the ruling party of the Jews) took possession of Jesus' body. They wrapped it in spices and linen cloths, and laid it in a tomb. They rolled a cut rock in place to close the tomb, and the Romans put a seal on that rock to make sure no-one disturbed it.

Jesus Rose from the Dead

Each gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) tells what happened next in its own way. All of them have three things in common. (1) The tomb was discovered empty, (2) angels told Mary Magdalene and other women that Jesus had risen from the dead, and (3) Jesus began meeting again with his disciples.

Due to their love for him, Mary Magdalene and some other women were "last at the cross and first at the tomb," and Jesus appeared to them first. Then He visited the disciples and ate with them. During this time, Jesus explained why he had to die and resurrect. He let the disciples feel his hands, feet, and side - the body parts that were formerly pierced by nails and a spear. He stayed around for 40 days, continuing to speak about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1). On one occasion spoke to a group of more than 500 people (1 Cor. 15:6). Then, before leaving them and ascending to Heaven, he commanded his followers to carry his message to the world. This famous message is called The Great Commission (see Matthew 28:16-20).

The Meeting with Peter and John - John 21

In order to understand John 21, be sure to read Luke 5:1-11, Peter was not just talking about a fun way to spend the afternoon when he said, "I am going fishing." He had a thriving fishing business before Jesus interrupted his life (See Luke 5), and, having denied Jesus, he went back to it. He probably assumed Jesus had no more use for him. And he had to eat.

What's the Big Idea?

Jesus offers forgiveness that motivates us to love him and pursue meaningful lives.

What's the Problem?

We often feel useless and devalued because of our failures.



But as soon as he got back on the water, Jesus interrupted his life again. Jesus actually repeated the exact miracle he did years earlier, on the day he initially called Peter to follow him. Then they enjoyed eating breakfast together. Eventually, Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to restate his love. Peter had boasted that he would die for Jesus, but then he denied him three times (See John 18: 15-27). By asking him "Do you love me" three times, he pierced Peter's heart. No longer did Peter boldly affirm his intentions. Instead, Peter simply said, "You know all things. You know that I love you."

Jesus repeatedly told Peter to "Feed and tend" his sheep. With these verbs, he called him to a pastoral ministry. He also told Peter how he was going to die. Keep in mind, just a few weeks earlier, Jesus had been dressed in a purple robe and some people led him to a hill where he was crucified. Jesus told Peter he would also glorify God by dying as a martyr. That news hit Peter hard at first, as you might expect, but it served him greatly later. Through the power of the Spirit, Peter eventually came to peace with his destiny. It even made him bold. He ministered thirty more years before his own arrest and crucifixion. The apostle John was careful to record exactly what the Lord said about him too. Jesus didn't say that he would live until He returned, he just told Peter to mind his own business. But, interestingly, John was one of the few disciples who didn't die a martyr's death. And his witness, through his writings, has served the church for 2000 years.

Peter and John were both propelled by the love of Jesus: one toward a strategic pastoral ministry and martyr's crown, and the other toward a strategic witness (The Book of John) in written form.

Propelled by the Love of God: Martin Luther

Martin Luther (1483-1546) served in a monastery in Wittenberg, Germany. He was a very enthusiastic monk. If the rules called him to fast two days he would often fast six. If they called him to sleep with only one blanket, he would sleep without any. At one point he said, "If it were possible to gain salvation by being a monk, I would have done it. I outdid them all." But he never felt acceptable to God. He felt he could never do enough to earn God's favor or purge himself of all his sin. He stated, "As a monk I lived an irreproachable life. Nevertheless I felt that I was a sinner before God."

But then he began to study the scriptures for himself. He was amazed to see that God the Father rejected Christ the Righteous One. Why, he asked, would God reject the Son He loved, who was the only truly righteous Person on Earth? If God's standard is perfection, and Jesus Christ is perfect, why did God reject Him? It just didn't make sense to Luther.

But then one day he came across Romans 1:17 which says, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, 'the righteous will live by faith.'" And for the first time he understood. God rejected Jesus in order to accept those who trust in Him by faith. God imputed Christ's righteousness to sinners and punished Christ for their sin, all because of His love! God rejected His perfect Son in order to extend His love for us. Luther said, "Now I felt as if I had been reborn altogether, and had entered paradise..."

Propelled by the love of God, Luther had the courage to challenge a corrupt Roman Catholic Empire. His writings began what is known today as the Protestant Reformation.

What's Our Response?

Jesus' forgiveness frees us up to live courageous, meaningful lives.

What Are the Questions?

John 21, 1Pet 5:1-4, Acts 4:1-13; 18-20

LAUNCH

If you knew how and when you were going to die, how might your life change?

EXPLORE

Read [John 21: 1-8](#).

1. Who was at this event? And why did they decide to go fishing?
2. How did John and Peter respond to the large catch of fish? Why?
3. What does Peter's response tell you about his relationship with Jesus?

Read [John 21:9-14](#)

4. What did the disciples find when they got to shore?
5. What was Jesus there for?

Read [John 21:15-19](#).

6. What did Jesus mean by "Do you love me more than these?"
7. How did Peter respond?
8. Why did Jesus ask him three times? And why was Peter grieved?

Checkout [Psalms 32 and 51](#).

9. Spend a couple minutes reading these Psalms. What do you learn about guilt? What do you learn about forgiveness?
10. What makes God's forgiveness so special?

Go back to [John 21:15-19](#).

11. What did Jesus command Peter to do three times? What does that mean?

Read [1 Peter 5:1-4](#)

12. Based on his counsel for younger pastors, do you think Peter got this message? Why?

Go back to [John 21:15-19](#).

13. What other news did Jesus have for Peter?
14. Why did Jesus tell him this?

Checkout [Acts 4:1-13; 18-20](#)

15. Peter denied Jesus three times on the night he was betrayed. But how did his character change later? Why?

Read [John 21:20-25](#)

16. Did Jesus tell Peter what was going to happen to John? What was his destiny?

APPLY

17. Have you experienced God's forgiveness? When? How? How has it affected your life?
18. Why is experiencing God's forgiveness better than earning His favor?

19. Knowing that God forgives all who come to Him through Christ, do you feel encouraged to sin more, or free to serve God more? What keeps us from taking advantage of God's grace?

20. Is there anything worth dying for?

What Are the Answers?

1. Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John, and two unnamed disciples were on the scene. Peter had failed Jesus. Perhaps he thought God would never use him again. Regardless, he had to eat. He did what he knew best. He was a fisherman.
2. Read Luke 5:4-11. This was Jesus re-enacting the most important moment of Peter's life.
3. Peter loved Jesus.
4. Jesus, after his resurrection, with a meal ready just for them.
5. Jesus came to have a final conversation with his closest disciples.
6. Jesus was probably referring to the other disciples. Peter had claimed that he would never leave Jesus, even if everyone else did (Matt. 26:33) But he failed to stick by Jesus when it counted.
7. Peter stopped comparing himself to others. He just said, "You know I love you."
8. Peter had denied Jesus three times. Jesus was restoring Peter by allowing him to affirm his love again three times. Jesus' point hit home when he asked Peter the third time.
9. Consider having a couple people look at Psalm 32 and others look at Psalm 51.
10. Discuss
11. The images of a shepherd, "Feed my sheep" and "Tend to my sheep" convey a pastoral responsibility. Jesus was calling Peter to be a leader.
12. Notice how Peter counsels leaders to care for people like a gentle shepherd.
13. Jesus told Peter he was going to die as a martyr. A few weeks earlier, Peter watched Jesus get dressed in a purple robe before he had to stretch his arms out and carry a crossbeam to his crucifixion.
14. Jesus didn't tell him this to depress him. He told him this to set him free. Instead of denying Christ, Peter would go on to give his life for him.
15. The Holy Spirit empowered Peter to be incredibly bold for Christ.
16. Jesus didn't say that John would live until he returned. He basically just said, "mind your own business." But it's interesting to note that Peter went on to be a great church leader and he died as a martyr 30 years after this conversation. But John was exiled, lived much longer, and wrote the book of John. This book has been a key witness of Christ for 2000 years, and it will continue to serve that purpose until He returns.
- 17-18. Discuss. Consider telling the story of Martin Luther.
19. Love for Jesus is one thing that keeps us from sin.
20. Discuss

Memorize

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17