

JOHN 1-12

Journal







WELCOME TO *John*

John tells us at the end of his gospel: "These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." While this may seem elementary for those of us who have already "believed in Jesus" as an entry point into a relationship with him, John declares that we can never stop growing in our trust in Jesus.

In light of John's statement, this journal is simply a tool with two goals that come from our convictions about the Scriptures. First, the journal is designed to help you develop a personal habit of interaction and meditation on the Scriptures. We have found this habit to be absolutely crucial for maturity in Christ. Second, our hope is that the journal would not just be a study of ideas about Jesus. Instead, we hope the journal will aid you in actually knowing Jesus Himself through the Gospel of John. It is meant to help you understand the amazing tapestry of stories that is the Gospel of John, and that by understanding those stories you would come to a greater personal trust in the person of Jesus. While these goals seem simple, they are only possible by the power of God. And so, our prayer for this journal comes from Psalm 90:16:

"Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children."

Amen.

-THE ELDERS OF RED MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY CHURCH

We would love to help you answer any questions you may have as you go through this journal. Just send a quick email to info@rmcchurch.org with your question(s) and one of our pastors will get back to you as quickly as possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THREADS IN JOHN	PAGES I – II
WEEK ONE: JOHN 1:1-2:25	PAGES 1-16
WEEK TWO: JOHN 3:1-5:18	PAGES 17-30
WEEK THREE: JOHN 5:19-7:24	PAGES 31-42
WEEK FOUR: JOHN 7:25-8:47	PAGES 43-54
WEEK FIVE: JOHN 8:48-10:42	PAGES 55-64
WEEK SIX: JOHN 11:1-12:50	PAGES 65-74

**APPENDIX 1:
THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

PAGE V-IX

**APPENDIX 2:
THREADS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

PAGE X-XIII

SURVEY

PAGE XV

An Introduction to
**THREADS IN THE
GOSPEL OF JOHN**

You could compare John's gospel to a tapestry: a piece of thick fabric with designs formed by weaving colored threads together. Below you will find a list of eight "threads" that John uses to weave together a picture of Jesus. He briefly introduces each of these in his prologue, and develops each of them in a complex interworking of stories, speeches and debates all pointing to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

- 1. GOD THE FATHER SENT JESUS BECAUSE HE LOVED THE WORLD.**
- 2. JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.**
- 3. JESUS FULFILLED THE OLD COVENANT AND BROUGHT THE NEW COVENANT.**
- 4. JESUS PROVIDES A WAY OF LIFE THROUGH BELIEF IN JESUS.**
- 5. THE WAY IS OPEN TO ALL.**
- 6. THOSE WHO BELIEVE ENTER LIFE NOW.**
- 7. JUST AS THE FATHER SENT JESUS, JESUS SENDS OUT HIS FOLLOWERS.**
- 8. DESPITE THE OVERWHELMING CREDENTIALS OF JESUS AS THE SENT SON OF GOD, JESUS WAS REJECTED BY MANY OF HIS OWN PEOPLE.**

(For more on the threads found in the Gospel of John, see Appendix Two.)

WEEK
- ONE -
JOHN 1:1-2:25





DAY ONE - JOHN 1:1-18

The "prologue." This opening set of verses is masterfully crafted. Pay close attention to the words here, because John is setting us up with all the key words that introduce the themes and motifs of his gospel. Many of the words mentioned here will show up all over the rest of the gospel. (For more info on themes, see Appendix Two)

1. In verse 4 John says the "life" was in Jesus. Do you think he means physical life, spiritual life, quality of life, or what? What are some things you have wrongly trusted to deliver "life" to you?

2. John decides to reveal the end of the story at the beginning. Jesus' own people rejected Him. How can we help each other stay on the cutting edge of the faith life so as not to slouch toward distrust?

3. Verse 12 speaks of "the right to become children of God." In what sense is "becoming a child of God" a done deal and in what sense is it a continuing journey? What are some ways in which God is inviting you to become more of a child of God?

4. How have you seen Jesus bring grace and truth into your life?

On "Belief"

John wastes no time in mentioning the concept of "belief" and its importance to the story of Jesus. Here are some thoughts on John 1:6-7 and the concept of belief in John's narrative and beyond:

The heart of God in sending John the Baptist was to prepare hearts in Israel so that all of them might believe in Jesus. Various forms of this word "believe" occur more than 60 times in John's gospel. Believing is the theme of this book you are reading. God is using the apostle John's style and language to woo us toward believing in Him.

If you were to look up the Greek verb for "believe" that John uses here you would find that most lexicons list the English word "trust" as a synonym. The word "trust" is a word we are using in Western cultures a lot these days. We have become very conscious of what broken trust does in relationships, what violated trust does and what no trust does. Today we are acutely aware that we have trust issues due to what life among fallen humans does to us. We can also easily understand that we have trust issues with God. For many people, atheism is likely a symptom of deeper trust issues with God.

Here's the big point: John seeks to help us work through our baggage from life in the fallen world, and bring us to great trust in our Creator-God. God is trustworthy. He has always done what He has said He will do. Most people don't know that. Jesus makes the trustworthiness of God visible.

And so, we would like to challenge you to think “trust” as you read John when you see the verb believe. It allows us to feel what God is seeking to lead us into. John will tell us of acts of love and grace that God initiated toward us to help us trust Him. This trust of ours starts out weak. God continually invites us to trust Him more by assuring us of His character. In Jesus’ teaching He is asking us to allow Him to shape more and more areas of our lives. So, His invitation to the unbeliever is to trust Him. That is His invitation to the one who has walked a lifetime with Him as well. Trusting Jesus is the great unfinished work in all of our lives.

So in verse 7 we should understand John saying, “He (John the Baptist) came as a witness to bear witness about the light (Jesus), that all might trust God through Him.” You’ll have an opportunity to think through your trust in Jesus over 60 more times as you read about belief and unbelief in the book of John. Trust in Him changes everything!

DAY TWO - JOHN 1:19-34

1. As you read these verses, what are some things John the Baptist understood about himself and Jesus that made him point others toward Jesus? What are some reasons it is important for us to point others away from us and toward Jesus?

2. In verse 29 John makes an important statement about the identity of Jesus. What should the audience have understood through these words? In what sense does Jesus take away "the sin of the world"?

3. John links the Holy Spirit to the person and work of Jesus. Why can you be certain the Holy Spirit is present in you and speaking with you? Why is this important?

4. How did the Holy Spirit speak to you today through these verses?

DAY THREE - JOHN 1:35-51

1. What are some of the things John the Baptizer was proclaiming about Jesus when he said, "Behold the lamb of God!"?

2. In these verses we see Jesus beginning to gather His core group of followers. What do you think these men had come to see and know about Jesus that made them so willing to follow Him?

3. Existing relationships were a key component in Jesus' choice of these men. What should we learn from this observation in terms of ministry God might have for us?

4. Andrew (verse 41), Philip (verse 45) and Nathanael (verse 49) all made important observations about Jesus. What were some of the things that they had to learn over the coming years about following Him?

5. Who are some people you have some influence with that you could possibly introduce to Jesus? Begin to pray for them today.

DAY FOUR - JOHN 2:1-12

Turning water into wine at a wedding is the first of seven “signs” that Jesus does in John’s gospel.

(For the other signs, see 4:46-54; 5:1-15; 6:5-13; 9:1-7; 11:1-44; 20:1-30)

1. John records a brief interaction between Jesus and His mother. What do you make of this conversation? What do you think Jesus knew about Himself and what are some things His parents had to help Him learn?

2. John writes that Jesus “manifested His glory” through this miracle. What are some things Jesus showed about Himself here that are glorious? (For a helpful look at some Old Testament background to this story see Isaiah 25:6; Jeremiah 31:10-14; Amos 9:11-13.)

3. The statements made by some of Jesus' disciples in the previous chapter showed that they had already believed in Him. Now John says that through this miracle His disciples "believed in Him." What do you think he means here? (For more about "belief" in John, see "On Belief" on pages 3-4.)

4. What is an area of your life with which you don't fully trust God? If you ponder Jesus' "glory", how might it help you trust Him more?

5. In that culture, it brought public shame and disgrace to run out of wine, yet Jesus saves the family from this. What shame is He delivering you from?

On "My Hour"

God wants us to be encouraged and composed by reminders that He reigns sovereignly over the affairs of the fallen world. We can trust Him in this. So throughout John's narrative reminders of Yahweh's sovereign workings occur in the midst of the apparent chaos of evil. This is the first, others are plainly marked. You'll come across phrases like "His hour had not yet come", or "an hour is coming when," or "the hour has come." When you read these remember that God's timetable cannot be thwarted by anything or anyone!

There was a time in the scheduled plan of God for Jesus when:

- *God would begin to widely reveal His identity (2:4).*
- *He would be unjustly arrested and condemned by humans (7:30; 8:20).*
- *He would be glorified by giving up His very life for others (12:22-28).*
- *He would no longer be visibly present on the earth (13:1).*
- *He would be glorified by God, enthroned as His king over all creation (17:1-5).*

Because of this schedule that Jesus lived, we would experience a time in the scheduled plan of God when:

- *The place of worship would become irrelevant because His Spirit would be united with ours (4:21-23).*
- *The dead would be raised (5:25-28).*
- *Among all peoples Jesus would be sought out and glorified through His sacrifice of Himself (12:20-33).*
- *Believers would be unjustly persecuted and killed (16:2, 32).*
- *Jesus' revelation would become crystal clear to us (16:25).*

At 16:21 a powerful illustration of all this is given through these words of Jesus, "When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world." The universal experience of the joy of the birth of a baby reminds us that Yahweh's sovereign plan, schedule and timing is our certain hope. He is trustworthy!

DAY FIVE - JOHN 2:13-25

1. We learn from this story that it is possible to be angry without sinning. When is anger good? What makes it bad? What are some things you have to do to rule your own anger well?

2. Jesus gives the Jewish leaders (whom He had just made look bad) a sign of His authority by cryptically talking of His resurrection. What are some things that Jesus' resurrection on the third day prove about Him and God's overall plan?

3. Verses 24-25 tell us something that was going on inside the head of Jesus—He was careful with people. What is important about this? How should we imitate Him in this? Why do we need to be careful in terms of imitating Him in this?

4. What are some things you think that God would like to turn upside down and drive out of your life?

For a further look into this question, look at Jeremiah 7:1-15 (which Jesus quotes in Mark's version of the story) where he explains what God wants to turn upside down in Israel.

On John's Personal Explanations

John 2:21-22 is the first of a number of instances when John adds to his narrative a personal explanation of the moment he has just reported. In this case he alerts us to the fact that Jesus' statement was prophetic. It was not easy to understand in the moment, but very significant to His ministry and to us dealing with our doubts and trusting Him.

As you read John you will become aware of him doing this frequently. He steps out of the narrative and adds some detail that allows us to have a deeper understanding of an event's significance. These personal explanations are gems in terms of us understanding better the life and mission of Christ. Invariably they draw us deeper into the story and quicken our pulse a little as we read. You will find another one a few verses later in 2:24-25.

As you read on you'll find them at:

6:6, 64, 71; 7:5, 39; 8:6, 27; 9:22-23; 11:13, 51-53; 12:16-19, 33, 36b-43; 13:1-3, 11; 19:35-37; 20:30-31; 21:23-25.

ON JOHN'S PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS



WEEK
- TWO -
JOHN 3:1-5:18



DAY ONE - JOHN 3:1-21

We see in Chapter 2 that Jesus has fulfilled the old system for a relationship with God. The jars for ceremonial washing are now simply holding tanks for the abundant supply of wine. He must now explain what the new system, His kingdom, will be. There are big lingering questions for the readers like who is "in" this new kingdom? How does one get "in"? This next story helps answer these. Also, for the second time in John, we see the word "light" used figuratively a number of times in verses 19-21 (see also 1:4-5). Read more about "light" on page 49 to get a good understanding of how we should understand that term in John's writings.

1. Why do you think Jesus found it incredible that Nicodemus did not understand the idea of being born of the Spirit? (Read Deuteronomy 5:28-29; 29:2-4; 30:1-8; Jeremiah 31:33; 32:39-40.)

2. What were some things Jesus was trying to express through verse 8 about spiritual birth and being born again?

3. Verses 16-18 state the basic gospel message and some important realities about us. What are these and how have you experienced their presence in your own heart and mind?

4. At this point, John's narrative brings the reader to one simple question: Have you put your trust in Jesus the Messiah? So, have YOU? Do you trust Him with your life?

DAY TWO - JOHN 3:22-36

1. What does John's example here teach us about our own reception of praise? What is an example of a time when you were really bothered by the praise someone else received instead of you?

2. John's short statement in verse 30 is profound. What are some steps you could take to be smaller in order to make Jesus bigger?

3. Read verse 31. What are some things that tend to come about when we do things in an "earthly way"?

4. What is something spoken of in these verses that you think God wants you to think through more?

DAY THREE - JOHN 4:1-30

For an in-depth look at the relationship between Jews and Samaritans, see page 23.

1. Read verses 5-6. Why did Jesus stop at this well?

2. Notice that Jesus takes the conversation away from points of distraction and into deeper levels. How can we do that in our conversations today?

3. What do you think Jesus was talking about in verses 23-24?

4. If Jesus were to meet you like this, what idolatry and darkness would He confront in you? How would He approach this conversation with you?

On Samaria and Samaritans

Read 2 Kings 17.

In speaking about the Samaritan woman's surprise that Jesus was speaking to her (4:9), John adds the explanatory note that "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." You may wonder as you read why such racism existed.

In Israel's history the time came when the nation of Israel split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom was composed of 10 of the original 12 tribes. It was called Israel and its capital became Samaria. The other two tribes composed the southern kingdom. It was called Judah and its capital became Jerusalem. Over time both kingdoms fell due to their disobedience to Yahweh. Israel and the kings who reigned from Samaria were grossly disobedient to Yahweh over many years. Their discipline increased in severity until many of them were carried captive far from their land and other people groups were forced by Assyria to settle into Samaria and Israel's other territories. The result over time was a great racial mixing, which ethnic Jews abhorred. You can read 2 Kings 17 for the details. It shows that Samaria became not only ethnically mixed, but more significantly it became a spiritual hodgepodge as well. And so, by Jesus' day, ethnic Jews held great prejudice toward the Samaritans because of their disobedience to God.

In holding their racist attitude toward the Samaritans, the Jews were wrong. They were ignoring countless references in their Scriptures to the fact that Yahweh was reaching out to ALL peoples and inviting them into His family.

The Jews did not have an exclusive right to Him. They had no innate moral superiority over other ethnicities. John places this story of the Samaritans in the context of an account of the growing disbelief among the Jews. And so John 4 is the wonderful story of many gentiles believing in Jesus. It is the story of God's posture toward those we might marginalize due to their sin.

The story of the growth of belief in Christ among the Samaritans does not end with this story reported by John. It is picked up by Luke in his account of the history of the ministry of the apostles. Acts 8:4-8 speaks of a huge response of the Samaritans to the preaching of an evangelist from Jerusalem named Phillip. God gathered a people from among these outcasts, even while those who considered themselves more worthy were refusing to accept Yahweh's message to them through His Messiah.

This story of Jesus and the people of Samaria raises the hope of the miraculous movement spoken of by the prophets. Yahweh would create His movement just as He had the world, out of emptiness and chaos. Even while the Jews were asking Jesus for a sign, the belief of the Samaritans was one of a number of signs Yahweh was giving that Jesus was their promised Deliverer and King.

DAY FOUR - JOHN 4:31-54

The healing of the royal official's son is the second of seven "signs."

1. If we could live with our hearts well-tuned to the Spirit, what are some ways in which Jesus' words in verse 34 would be true of us? What do you think it would feel like physically?

2. Verses 39-41 show that the Samaritans respond to Jesus much better than the Jews. What prejudice do you have that limits who you speak to about Jesus, or who you show grace and kindness to?

3. Jesus makes a comment in verse 48 about belief and signs. From what you know of Jesus' ministry, do you think more people would have believed if He would have done more signs?

4. Go back to verses 36-38. What important ideas do you think God wants you to take away from what Jesus says here? What might He want to re-ignite in your heart?

DAY FIVE - JOHN 5:1-18

This miracle is third of the seven “signs” that Jesus does. It causes real division in the people, as John points out in verse 18. Notice that the real problem for people is not the sign itself, but the claims Jesus was making about Himself. The problem was not figuring out if He was human; the problem was to see Him as God Himself in human form. In addition, these verses report Jesus’ first encounter with what we call “legalism.” For an in-depth look at this term, see page 29.

1. As you think about incidents like this where Jesus heals people, it could cause you to have some questions. What are some questions you have as you read these verses?

2. The Jews were very strict about the sabbath. What was legitimate about their strictness and what was not legitimate? In what sense should we observe the sabbath?

3. What do you make of Jesus' exhortation to this man in verse 14? Do you believe that one's sin can lead them to sickness?

4. Verse 17 reminds us that God is always working. What is something that God is leading you to begin, begin again, or end based on what you have read and thought about as you read John's words?

On Legalism

We MUST understand what legalism is because, according to Jesus, it is a clear and present danger always! The word "legalism" is one that occurs frequently in the vocabulary of Christians. We tend to view routine and rules as legalism. Freedom and spontaneity we view as true spirituality. We seek miraculous transformation and resist a call for routine and self-discipline. How do we navigate this tension as we walk the road of transformation?

The word "legalism" does not appear in the Bible. But it is an "ism," that is, a belief system that is frequently addressed in the Bible. Legalism is a core belief that law or rules are the trustworthy means by which we earn Yahweh's favor. It is the confidence that people can and do earn favor and blessing from God because they obey rules and follow routine, which are either stated or implied in the Bible. So legalism is essentially false confidence in the moral ability of humanity. That's why Jesus attacked it. It is opposed to the entire testimony of Scripture.

Now, it is clear in Scripture that IF humans had the moral ability to live by the law, they would certainly live in Yahweh's blessing. It is also clear in Scripture that we lack that ability. It is clear through the example of Israel and in the plain statements of Scripture (Romans 3:9-20).

The teaching of Scripture is that the Law is good. We are not. So the Law is not a means of us earning God's favor except indirectly. It reveals our inability. There is nothing like rules to prove to us that we are rule-breakers! We see through rules the need for God's grace. Ironically, the Law introduces us to Jesus Christ.

Legalism is not necessarily present when one lives by routine or is self-disciplined or has established rules for themselves. Legalism is a mistaken trust in rules as the means provided by God for us to gain approval and status with Him. It is the belief that through such things as routine, self-denial, and conformity to rules God will honor us.

Know that if you do something because you're convinced it makes you acceptable in God's eyes, or special, or that it makes up for some mistakes you've made, that is legalism. It is enslaving you. You are failing to trust in Yahweh's grace and to live by that grace. However, if you do something even though you don't feel like it, just because you're convinced God wants you to do it, that's not legalism. It's grace in action. It is likely inspired by the Holy Spirit. If you do something because you're convinced God wants it and you want His wind in your sails, that's not legalism. It's grace in action. If you adopt a routine or cultivate a habit because you wish to strengthen your faith, that's not legalism. It's grace in action.

So say "No!" to legalism, guilt and shame that urge you to do something to prove your worth to God or to get back on His good side. Say "Yes!" to all that the Spirit can use to break old habits and thinking patterns through new ones!

WEEK
-THREE-
JOHN 5:19-7:24





DAY ONE - JOHN 5:19-47

By now, we see a common pattern in John's gospel: Jesus says or does something, the people misunderstand, Jesus responds to their misunderstanding. Sometimes Jesus' responses can be cryptic or simply hard to understand, but it's important to meditate on them because we find significant truths for our lives in His words.

1. Read verse 19. How was it that Jesus was able to lead a sinless life? We are not able to be sinless, but what does this verse imply about how we might sin less?

2. According to verses 20-29, what two great works will Jesus do that will eclipse the spectacular healings that He performed during His previous ministry on earth?

3. Thus far John has recorded several concise statements made by Jesus about how we gain eternal life. What is the essential thing He calls us to do in order to have eternal life (Verse 24, see also 3:14,16,36)?

4. As Bible believing people, what do we need to be careful of in view of Jesus' words in verses 39-40? What can the Bible do for us and what is it unable to do?

On the Value of Scripture

As you read this section you came to a curious thing Jesus said to His audience. In verse 39 Jesus speaks to the obsession of some in the audience with Scripture. How is it possible to be too focused on the Bible?

Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy that Scripture is God-breathed. God is its source. Because He is its source it is different than any other book. It is without error and is authoritative in all that it affirms. Paul also told Timothy that Scripture is profitable. It gives back to us far more than it requires of us. It does so with respect to its instruction, its reproof of our thoughts, the correction it gives us and for the training it gives us in righteousness. The Bible can help us become competent as people of God. We can be equipped by it for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This is the potential of the Bible and we must hold to the highest view of Scripture if we are to experience the life God longs for us to have.

We must remember, however, that the Bible does not save us. Apart from the work of Jesus, the Bible would simply be information—good information, without error, but still words on pages. The old covenant proved that having the right information in written form did not help people be forgiven for their offenses against Yahweh, nor be saved from pathways of behavior they more naturally chose. The old covenant was specific on this point. Salvation would only be accomplished through a sin-bearer God would provide for His people. They would only obey Yahweh once He placed His Spirit in them.

The greatest of news stories is that eternal life was brought about for us by Jesus dying as our sin-bearer and God extending forgiveness for all who trusted Him. We are given eternal life through Jesus, then we are restored to fellowship with God, and joined to His Spirit. With the Spirit's help we learn and trust the testimony of the Bible about our thinking, desires and behavior. As we do this we are saved from the ravages of sin. We experience an eternal quality of life as we follow the Spirit's lead through the examples and directives of Scripture. This is the greatest of reconciliations—humans reconciled to their Creator. The truth of Jesus is the greatest truth humans can possess.

In the Scripture eternal life is described and modeled, its principles expounded and its attractiveness made plain. But this life would be unavailable to us apart from Jesus Christ. It is as John said, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

DAY TWO - JOHN 6:1-21

This is the fourth of seven "signs" in John's gospel. Notice again the narrative pattern of John: Jesus saying or doing something, then the crowd having a mixed reaction.

1. In verse 2 John tells us why the crowds came out to see Jesus. What's great about this and what is rather suspicious or ominous?

2. Why do you think Jesus asked the question to Philip in verse 5? What is the difference between Philip's answer and Andrew's?

3. What are some of the reasons Jesus withdrew from the crowd when He sensed they were going to make Him king? What does this reveal about Him? (For a little background on the term "prophet" in verse 14, check out Deuteronomy 18:15-18 and 34:10-12. See also Acts 3:19-26)

4. What struck you about this story today?

DAY THREE - JOHN 6:22-40

1. Verse 27 gives us a great piece of advice. How might God be leading you to implement Jesus' advice more fully?

2. We often speak of doing good works and we even argue about the role of good works in the Christian life. According to Jesus, what is the work of God (verse 29)? What are some ways in which you are not yet done with this work?

3. Because of the experience of the previous day (verses 16-21) the discussion quickly turned to bread. Looking back at 6:2, 25, and 30, what do you think the crowd was hoping to get from Jesus?

4. Read verses 35-40 and make a list of some important truths we MUST remember about Jesus from what He says of Himself. Which is the most important one for you today? Confess to Jesus right now that you often lose sight of who He is. Ask Him to keep reminding you of what's true about Him.

DAY FOUR - JOHN 6:41-71

These verses mark a turning point in the life of Jesus. Public opinion begins to turn against Him, and many of His disciples leave Him. John's narrative is increasingly occupied with the growing conflict between Jesus and those who were resisting His message.

1. Jesus says some hard things in these verses. What are some issues raised in your mind by His hard statement in verse 44 about who initiates our salvation?

2. Jesus says some more hard things in verses 50-58. Why do you think He said such hard things to people who were already struggling to believe in Him?

3. Even Jesus' disciples start having a hard time with His statements and question Him about saying such hard things (verses 60-68). What are some hard things He tells them that they/we need to work through and trust?

4. What is inspiring, moving and true in what Peter says at this moment as many disciples walk away? What do you think God does to prepare us for "hard things" so that we stand firm in moments that test our trust in Jesus?

DAY FIVE - JOHN 7:1-24

Chapter 7 through 10:21 takes place during the Jewish "Feast of Booths" (also called the Feast of Tabernacles, see Leviticus 23:33-44 and Deuteronomy 16:13-15). It was a week long celebration focusing primarily on thanksgiving to Yahweh for a good harvest and secondarily for His provision during the exodus from Egypt. During the feast, people set up temporary shelters all over Jerusalem to remember Israel's wilderness wanderings.

1. This section reports how the public is responding to Jesus. In verses 1-5, what does it appear that Jesus' brothers want to happen to Him? How must that have felt to Him?

2. Jesus felt the weight of presenting the message of God truthfully (verses 6-7). In our desire to bring people to belief, what are some ways we can compromise the truth? What are some important things about God that people must hear from us?

3. Jesus says a key statement in verse 17. Ultimately, how does Jesus explain the growing division He is seeing among people? Why do some believe Him while others reject Him?

4. Jesus' defense of His act of healing a man on the Sabbath is sound (verses 21-24). It rests on the fact that God judges by the thoughts and intents of the heart, not just how an act appears. What is the upside of God knowing our heart? What is the sobering side of it?



WEEK
-FOUR-
JOHN 7:25-8:47



DAY ONE - JOHN 7:25-52

There were all kinds of ceremonies and rituals that made up the Feast of Booths. During the week, the priests would read out loud Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Zechariah 14:8 as part of the ceremonies. Check those out to aid your understanding of this story.

1. Read verses 28-29. Why did Jesus expect the crowd to know who He was and where He was from? How should they have known? What are some examples of things we SHOULD know about God and don't? What amazes you the most about the unbelief of the people in this story?

2. We see those opposing Jesus trying hard to arrest Him, but they are unable because "His hour had not yet come." What does this phrase teach us about God? In what types of situations do you need to recall this?

3. Jesus makes a wonderful prediction about a blessing He would provide for humanity. What is it? What would He do that would make this possible?

4. As you have read Jesus' words in these verses, how is God moving you right now to become more of a source of life to those around you? What are you thirsting for besides Jesus?

DAY TWO - JOHN 8:1-11

In presenting to you the story of the adulterous woman, your Bible probably has a brief note in it like this one from the ESV: "The earliest manuscripts do not include 7:53-8:11." This curious little notation could make you wonder about how accurate the Bible is today compared to when it was originally written. See Appendix One for an introductory treatment of how decisions were historically made about what should and should not be in the Bible.

We have already seen that if the people of Jesus' time had been attentive to all that Scripture was saying, they would have believed in Jesus. That means the ability to discern what agrees with Scripture is an important life skill. You get to practice that here on this particular text.

1. As you read this text and compare it with the message of the rest of Scripture, how is it in agreement with Scripture and how is it not in agreement with Scripture?

2. The Pharisees were right that the person who committed adultery was to be stoned (Leviticus 20:10). Assuming this story is true, why do you think Jesus stands in the way of them having the woman stoned?

3. The Pharisees leave Jesus alone and seem to recognize the wisdom of Jesus' words. They also seem convicted of their own sin in this moment. Do these things agree with what John has consistently shown about the Pharisees to His readers?

4. We cannot be certain about the validity of this story, but God has used it over the years. How did God use it today to speak to you?

DAY THREE - JOHN 8:12-30

Light was a key part of the Feast of Booths, and a key theme in the Old Testament (for a brief look at “light” in the Old Testament, see Exodus 13:20-22, 14:19-25; Psalm 27:1; 44:3; and Zechariah 14:6-7. Notice that in a few of them, God Himself is light, and so Jesus is equating Himself with God.)

1. What do you think Jesus means in verse 12 when He says, “I am the light of the world? What does it mean to “walk in darkness?”

2. In verse 13, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of having no witnesses to support His testimony about Himself. Jesus says He has a witness—God! How had God given confirming testimony to them about Jesus’ identity?

3. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "you will die in your sins" (verse 24). What does it mean to die in your sins? What has He been saying repeatedly about how to avoid this horrible end?

4. Do you think that you are the kind of person who looks for reasons TO believe, or looks for reasons NOT to believe?

On Light in the Writings of John

Twenty-four times in the Gospel of John we see the term "light" used in a symbolic way. Jesus referred to Himself as "the light of the world." He urges people to "walk by the light." "Light" appears as a symbol six more times in John's first letter (1 John).

As 21st century Americans, a natural way for us to take this word-picture is to interpret it in the sense that we symbolically use the words "light" and "darkness" today. And so we might read that Jesus is "the light of the world" and think, "Jesus is sinless and in Him there is no evil at all." While this is absolutely true, it is probably not the primary point that John and Jesus were getting at through this symbol of "light." We may miss the significant point of the symbolism if we impose our present use of these terms on the language used by Jesus and John. Our attention becomes focused on acting like Jesus rather than learning to think like He thought and taught. This was the error of the Pharisees.

From those who have given a lifetime to studying the writings of John we have learned that John was heavily influenced in the symbols he used by the writings of the Old Testament; in particular, the writings of Isaiah and the Psalms. If we study the metaphorical usage of "light" and "darkness" in those books we find that "light" refers to truth, to the understanding of it and submission to it. "Darkness" refers to ignorance of truth or rebellion against it.

(See Psalms 19:8, 36:9, 43:3, 56:13, 119:105, 130; Isaiah 2:5, 50:11)

Understood in this way, the teachings about “light” and “darkness” recorded by John help us approach our transformation correctly. Jesus is truth, meaning He defines and embodies truth. There is nothing Jesus does not know. There is no truth He is choosing to shun or suppress. Truth always regulates His action. In Jesus’ thoughts and in His actions there is no falsehood. He makes truth visible to us. We live holy lives when we understand truth and, like Jesus, conform our thinking and our conduct to it. We stray into unholiness when we set aside the truth or alter it, not allowing it to shape our thinking and behavior. If we focus on what is true and conform our thinking to it, we will act in a holy way.

Jesus is “light” and therefore a source of truth to us. Because He IS truth, He is THE source of our transformation. As such He gives us a most precious relationship. The words of the wise are, “Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23). Don’t sell Jesus in the moment!

DAY FOUR - JOHN 8:31-38

1. In verse 31 Jesus issues a challenge to this audience about being His disciples. What does it mean to "abide in my word"? Based on this, how many disciples are there of Jesus today? Are you one?

2. Would you tell someone that they will be set free by Jesus the moment they believe in Him, or would you tell them through a relationship with Jesus they can be set free? Why?

3. Why is verse 34 so important? What are some ways in which you have personally experienced being enslaved by sin?

4. Part of abiding in Jesus' word is to commit yourself to the study of the Scriptures. In your life, how has God used the Scriptures to set you free?

DAY FIVE - JOHN 8:39-47

1. In order to maintain the overall conversation, go back and re-read 8:12-38. Why do you think Jesus goes into this type of discussion?

2. In verse 39 Jesus says they "would be doing the works Abraham did." According to Genesis 15:6 (and Romans 4:1-17), what was the primary "work" that characterized Abraham in his relationship to Yahweh?

3. Read what Jesus says about Satan in verse 44. What are some things mentioned here that we should be on guard against? How have you witnessed these things about him?

4. What have you noticed so far in reading these stories? What has continually stuck out to you?

A photograph of a forest with a wooden boardwalk. The boardwalk is made of weathered wooden planks and winds through a dense forest of tall, thin trees. The ground is covered in moss and fallen leaves. The lighting is soft, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

WEEK
- FIVE -
JOHN 8:48-10:42



DAY ONE - JOHN 8:48-59

1. The Jews demean Jesus, their Messiah. Jesus notes they have insulted Him (verse 49), then says, "Yet I do not seek my own glory . . ." Why was this great news for all of humanity?

2. Jesus says, "If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death," and the crowd totally misunderstands Him. What kind of death was He talking about here?

3. Read verses 56-59. Jesus says, "before Abraham was, I am." What in Jesus' words made the Jews pick up stones to stone Him (see Exodus 3:13-15)?

4. In Chapters 7-8, you have pondered stories in which religious people resisted God vigorously. What has God shown you about yourself as you have read some of these words?

DAY TWO - JOHN 9:1-23

This is the fifth of seven "signs" in John's gospel. Given Jesus' words in 9:5, we also see that it is a story that further explains the discussion in Chapter 8.

1. Have you ever had thoughts like Jesus' disciples verbalized (verse 2) when you see suffering? In what way is this type of thinking legitimate and in what way is it faulty and dangerous?

2. Jesus says "that the words of God might be displayed." With these words, is Jesus giving the purpose or result of the man's blindness?

3. Would it be all right for you to ask questions to see if a miracle actually occurred? What strikes you about the Pharisees' line of questioning as they are confronted with the possibility that a miracle has occurred through Jesus?

4. Verse 22 describes the pressure the cured man's parents felt in this situation. What were some things lacking in them that God longs to see in us? In what ways do you identify with them?

DAY THREE - JOHN 9:24-41

1. Three times in verses 24-33 the cured man gives great answers to those questioning him. What inspires you the most about his comments and what amazes you the most about those questioning him?

2. Verse 34 gives us the final response of the questioners to the cured man. What are some things their response reveals about their inner standing with God?

3. In conversing with the man and some of the Pharisees after all this, Jesus makes two important statements using blindness as a metaphor (verses 39-41). What are some important take-aways from Jesus' words?

4. As you have read this story over the past two days, what are some things about which the Lord has spoken to you?

DAY FOUR - JOHN 10:1-21

1. Because context is always important when reading and applying God's word to our lives, read the last two verses of the previous chapter and, without stopping, read the first six verses of Chapter 10. Why do you think John places these words of Jesus immediately after the story of the curing of the blind man?

2. What are some of the critical truths that Jesus is trying to get people to see through His words in verse 10?

3. In verses 11-15, Jesus describes Himself as the good shepherd and contrasts the care He gives the sheep with that given by a hired hand. Why is this contrast important for us to understand today in the 21st century?

4. In verses 16-18, Jesus makes a number of statements about laying down His life. Was Jesus' death an accident or outside of God's plan? Did Satan win when Jesus died on the cross?

DAY FIVE - JOHN 10:22-42

Geography is important for John. With this story and the next, he points out that Jesus is not accepted in Jerusalem, which is the very place He should be accepted. When He goes to the other side of the Jordan, that's the place where He shouldn't be accepted, and yet He is. Those who accept Jesus are often those we would least expect.

1. If you had lived during Jesus' time and had witnessed His life, what might have given you doubts about Him being God?

2. Jesus speaks with the Jews about how a person comes to belief and remains one of His sheep. How do these verses say belief happens? What are the important elements of Jesus' teaching in verses 25-29? What are the implications for you?

3. Jesus presses the crowd hard to pay attention to the works that He had done. He is right. These are compelling evidence. Why don't more believe? What do you think "works" today in terms of convincing people that Jesus is God?

4. What are some areas of life in which you distrust God? How do you think you can deepen your trust of Him?

A rural landscape with a wooden fence and a dirt road. The fence is made of weathered wooden posts and rails, running across the middle ground. The ground is dry and dusty, with some sparse vegetation. In the foreground, there are dark, out-of-focus branches of a tree or shrub. The background shows a dirt road or path leading into the distance under a clear sky.

WEEK
-SIX-
JOHN 11:1-12:50



DAY ONE - JOHN 11:1-16

The raising of Lazarus is a central story to John's overall structure. It is the sixth of seven "signs". Chapters 1-10 have all been building to this moment. Before you get to the questions today, it might be helpful to read all of Chapter 11.

1. Verses 5 and 6 seem to contradict each other. What are some things you have had to do with those you love that seemed unloving to them? How are you with being misunderstood?

2. As Jesus heads into danger in Judea He makes an important statement in verses 9-10 about living well. It can be taken many ways. What do you think is the point of these cryptic words to His disciples?

3. Why do you think John included Thomas' comment to the rest of the disciples in verse 16? What is significant about it?

4. What are some examples in your life of times God has seemed to take too long to show up? What do you think His purpose was?

DAY TWO - JOHN 11:17-44

1. Verse 21 shows us that Martha obviously believed in Jesus' power. However, Jesus has to assure her that the reason we have hope is a person. He Himself is our hope (verses 23-26). Why was this important for Him to demonstrate for us? Why is it important to believe?

2. Jesus knew what He was about to do, yet He wept (verse 35). Why is it important for us to know this? What is significant to you about Jesus' emotions?

3. There was whispering in the crowd that questioned whether Jesus had done enough (verse 37). What does this tell you that you will experience as His representative? How can you enhance the reputation of Christ's people?

4. How has God spoken to you through this entire narrative about Lazarus, his sisters, Jesus and the crowd?

DAY THREE - JOHN 11:45-57

1. The Pharisees have asked many times for a "sign" from Jesus. In verse 47 they admit to having seen many such signs. What do you think is happening in their minds that keeps them from admitting they are wrong, and do you think you know when you are doing this?

2. In verses 49-53 we read of Caiaphas, an evil man, used by God to utter a very profound prophetic statement. What does this tell us about the power of God and that of evil forces and beings? When should you remember this?

3. Verse 52 speaks of a “gathering” work that Jesus’ death brought about. What would you like said of you regarding how you contributed to this gathering of God’s family from all people groups?

4. Did you spot yourself in these verses? Did God bring something to your attention as you read, either to encourage you or correct you?

DAY FOUR - JOHN 12:1-19

In this chapter, John shows how the raising of Lazarus brought about Jesus' arrest and eventual death.

1. In verses 1-11 we see several things happening at Lazarus' house. The first is the worshipful act of Mary. What might God be saying to you through Mary's act about your devotion to and worship of Him?

2. What are some things we should understand about life in God's family due to the reality of Judas being part of the inner circle of Jesus' companions?

3. Next in these verses is the account of Jesus' parade in Jerusalem. What was God's message to humanity in orchestrating this event? What is His message to you today in putting it in front of you?

4. Why do you think the disciples did not understand the significance of this event? Should they have? Why do you think John feels we need to know of their misunderstanding?

DAY FIVE - JOHN 12:20-50

1. Read verses 20-23. Jesus sees the fact that a group of Greeks want to see Him as a signal of an "hour" that has arrived. In the verses that follow what are some things Jesus says will happen next? What is the "rule" of the new era and how can we live it out today?

2. In verses 31-32, Jesus says more about this new era. What are some things His followers have understood ever since about these important words?

3. Verses 36-43 report the greatest tragedy that can come about in any life. What are some important, sobering ideas from John's rather detailed commentary on this?

4. Following John's commentary on this unfolding tragedy he records some things Jesus said. As he closes the first half of his gospel, what kind of moment do you think John is trying to create for us?



APPENDIX
- ONE -

THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Critics have routinely stated that the New Testament is full of errors.

Uninformed critics of the Bible, often in high places, make statements to the effect that research has established that there are over 150,000 various readings of the Bible in the ancient texts. The implication is that we don't really know that the Bible in our hands remotely agrees with what it said to the original readers. You need to know that such statements reflect a lack of awareness of the exhaustive research that has accumulated for centuries with regard to the transmission of the text of the New Testament. It is such a complex field of research that even well-studied, competent experts in other academic fields can be relatively uninformed in the matter of the ancient texts of the Bible.

It's true that there are 150,000 various readings of the Bible. That big number has a context. It does not mean that there are over 150,000 different versions of the New Testament. It refers to the fact that when the roughly 6,000 surviving copies of portions of the New Testament are examined, there are a total of 150,000 points at which there is a discrepancy of some sort among the early manuscripts. These variations have given rise to a field of research called "Textual Criticism", through which scholars seek to establish what the original reading was. "Textual Criticism" is a very complex, tedious and elite field of study. Suffice it to say you'll likely never meet a real textual critic!

Here are some things to know regarding errors in the copies of the Bible.

First, it is not surprising that errors occurred when hand-written copies were the only means of disseminating the book and its message for centuries.

A high percentage of errors resulted unintentionally for these reasons:

- **ERRORS OF SIGHT.** Scribes sometimes copied texts by looking back and forth to the originals. By this method, they inevitably made a number of errors of sight. For example, they confused letters that looked similar in appearance, divided words wrongly (the oldest Greek manuscripts of the Bible have no spaces between words), repeated words or sections, accidentally skipped letters, words or sections, or changed the order of letters in a word or words in a sentence.

- **ERRORS OF HEARING.** When scribes copied manuscripts through dictation (i.e., scribes wrote as a manuscript was being read) errors of hearing were made. For example, vowels, diphthongs, or other sounds were misheard. We make similar mistakes in English, for instance, writing “night”, when someone says “knight.”
- **ERRORS OF WRITING.** Sometimes scribes introduced errors into texts simply by writing the wrong thing. For example, a scribe might accidentally add an additional letter to the end of a word, resulting in a different meaning.
- **ERRORS OF JUDGMENT.** Sometimes scribes exercised poor judgment through incorporating marginal glosses (ancient footnotes) into the body of the text or similar unintentional corrupting influences.

Second, it is also freely admitted that intentional errors occurred in the copying of texts. Some examples are:

- **REVISING GRAMMAR AND SPELLING.** In an attempt to standardize grammar or spelling, scribes sometimes corrected what they perceived as orthographic or grammatical errors in the text they were copying.
- **HARMONIZING SIMILAR PASSAGES.** Scribes had a tendency to harmonize parallel passages and introduce uniformity to stylized expressions. For example, details from the same incident in multiple gospels might be included when copying any one gospel.
- **ELIMINATING APPARENT DISCREPANCIES AND DIFFICULTIES.** Scribes sometimes “fixed” what they perceived as a problem in the text.
- **CONFLATING THE TEXT.** Sometimes when a scribe knew of variant readings in the manuscript base from which he was copying, he would simply include both variants within his copy, conflating them.
- **ADAPTING DIFFERENT LITURGICAL TRADITIONS.** In a few isolated places, it is possible that church liturgy (i.e., stylized prayers or praises) influenced some textual additions or wording changes.

- **MAKING THEOLOGICAL OR DOCTRINAL CHANGES.** Sometimes scribes made theological or doctrinal changes, either omitting something they saw as wrong or making clarifying additions.

Textual Criticism seeks to deal head-on with these historical variations in the text to discover when the variation occurred, why it occurred, and what is the most likely reading among the variants. Textual critics hold various personal beliefs about the Bible. Their common agenda has simply been to understand what has been added, subtracted and changed in the text over the centuries.

The textual critic is faced with a mountain of data regarding the text of the New Testament. There are roughly 6,000 surviving manuscripts of all or portions of the New Testament. The good news is that this makes the New Testament far-and-away the best attested document of all ancient writings. The next closest contender is Homer's *The Iliad*, which has only 600 existing copies. The bad news is the extensive evidence makes textual criticism a long and tedious labor!

Many might think, "Why did God allow such a wide-open process of producing copies if this was indeed His book, containing His message for humanity? Why did He not preserve the original writings?" That is certainly one way of reacting to this present reality. However, here is something to think about when you catch yourself wondering if God goofed on this point. Knowing the corruption that took over God's movement, what if the original documents had been preserved in the "safe-keeping" of the Church? Would such original documents not have been altered by individuals seeking to gain some advantage? Would not the rulings of self-serving humans have contaminated the text? In that case, where would we find ourselves? Would we have any degree of confidence in our Bibles that were all derived from such a source?

The apparently helter-skelter process of passing the text along has proven to be an advantage. The value of having a large number of manuscripts written over a wide span of time is that it provides us with ample opportunity to compare writings. Scholars are able to cross-check manuscripts from different geographic areas or from different time periods. When making these comparisons it can be determined whether the documents were reliably

copied from the same source and it can be quantified how much they may have strayed from that source by seeing where and how they differ. One official copy would have raised suspicions in any and all thinking people. Many copies put the entire matter on the table, out in the open for many to examine and cross-examine.

The following are some of the criteria used to determine what reading is to be accepted where research reveals no clear verdict. They have been agreed upon by the overwhelming majority in the community of textual critics, believers and unbelievers alike. You should be impressed with the intellectual honesty reflected by these things.

- **FAVOR THE READING THAT BEST FITS THE LITERARY CONTEXT.** This holds true as a general rule. Of course, sometimes authors of the NT said shocking or unexpected things, so this criterion must not be rigidly applied.
- **FAVOR THE READING THAT BEST CORRESPONDS WITH WRITINGS BY THE SAME NT AUTHOR.** Authors have general stylistic patterns and theological motifs. As noted above, however, authors are not always predictable.
- **FAVOR THE READING THAT BEST EXPLAINS THE ORIGIN OF THE OTHER VARIANTS.** Similar to a detective story, it is sometimes possible to reconstruct a series of mistakes or attempted fixes that all flow from a scribal alteration of the original reading.
- **FAVOR THE SHORTER READING.** As texts were often lengthened or clarified, the shorter reading should often be preferred.
- **FAVOR THE MORE DIFFICULT READING.** Often the more difficult reading should be favored, as later additions are attempts to “fix” a perceived problem. This criterion cannot be applied in isolation from the other principles mentioned above, but scribes, when not making mistakes of hearing or sight, were prone to smooth out difficulties rather than introduce them.

At the conclusion, of the diligent, ongoing examination and evaluation of the New Testament manuscripts a textual critic who was himself a Christ-denying Unitarian stated this: "Of the 150,000 various readings of the Greek New Testament, we may dismiss nineteen-twentieths of them as supported by so little authority that no critic would regard them as having any claim to reception. This leaves, we will say, seven thousand five hundred. Of these nineteen-twentieths are of no sort of consequence as affecting the sense; they relate to questions of orthography (spelling and punctuation), or grammatical construction, or the order of words" (Ezra Abbot, member of the RSV American Revision Committee, in his *Critical Essays*). Many critics testify along these lines, "that only about 400 of the 150,000 variants caused doubt about the textual meaning, and only 50 of these are of great significance, and not one (of the 50) affects an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other undoubted passages or the whole tenor of Scripture (Phillip Schaff in *A Companion To The Greek Testament And The English Version*).

Comparing the incredible amount of manuscript evidence has demonstrated that the New Testament is 99.5% accurate. The vast majority of differences are in spelling or obvious minor copyist errors. Most importantly, it should be known that not a single variation in these thousands of manuscripts has been shown to affect a major theological tenant of Christianity in any way. While there are undoubtedly differences among the manuscripts, we can have confidence that the record we have is true to the originals. By and large the copies are incredibly similar to each other, despite being written at different times and in different places.

Now, what about the account of the adulterous woman in John 8? There are several reasons why many scholars question whether this passage belongs here in John's Gospel. Here are some of them:

1. The passage does not appear in the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts.
2. It is not found in the best manuscripts of the earliest translations of the Bible into Old Syriac, Coptic, Gothic, and Old Latin.
3. No Greek writer commented on this passage for the first 11 centuries of Christianity.
4. It is not cited by most of the great early church fathers, including Clement, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Cyril, and others.
5. Its style does not fit that of the rest of the Gospel of John.
6. It interrupts the flow of thought in John. John reads better if one goes right from John 7:52 to 8:12.

All this to say that there are good reasons for the note that appears in your Bible regarding this story. Be of good cheer! There has been a diverse group of scholars that for centuries have evaluated and re-evaluated every alternate reading of the Bible that has surfaced. What you hold in your hands is a trustworthy representation of God's message to us. It is noted wherever it is in any way in doubt. There is plenty of the text not in doubt to guide you to the correct view of what may be in doubt.

A photograph of a vineyard. In the foreground, a dirt path leads away from the viewer, flanked by rows of grapevines. The vines on the left are supported by a metal trellis system and have white plastic mulch covering the ground around their bases. The leaves on the vines are green with some yellowing, suggesting autumn. The path leads into the distance, where more vines and a building are visible under a bright sky. The overall scene is peaceful and well-maintained.

APPENDIX
- TWO -

THREADS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1. JOHN WANTS US TO KNOW THAT GOD THE FATHER SENT JESUS BECAUSE HE LOVED THE WORLD .

- 1:9, 18; 3:16, 34; 4:34; 5:19; 7:29; 8:26; 14:31.
- God the Father is mentioned over 100 times and is the initiator of salvation, the one who designed it and the one who is chiefly glorified by it (17:1-5).
- God loves his creation deeply and John shows that it is not humans reaching up to God, but rather God coming to them (15:13).
- God loves the entire world, not just Israel. We will see a huge concern for the nations all over the place (4:42; 8:12; 12:20-26), which coincides with God's plan in his covenant with Abraham, who would be a blessing to all nations.
- God sent Jesus, who was "with God." Jesus does only what the Father does or wants to do.

2. JOHN WANTS US TO KNOW THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.

- 1:1, 14; 20:3.
- In 20:31, John tells us this is his main goal.
- Jesus is the expected Jewish Messiah ("Christ"). He is the king who is to come and restore the nation of Israel (Genesis 17:8; 2 Samuel 7:13). This is good news for the Jewish people who have been under political oppression for over 600 years, and have been under spiritual oppression since Adam and Eve.
- Jesus is Divine, He wasn't just some human king (1:1; 5:18; 8:58; 17:5; use of the "I am"). Thomas got this right in his exclamation: "My Lord and my God!" (20:28).
- John used "signs" to show who Jesus was. Some of these are named as signs (2:1-11; 4:46-54; 6:1-14; 12:18) while others are probably assumed (5:1-9; 6:16-21; 9:1-7). While not specifically mentioned by John, note that there are seven signs. However, John ends his gospel saying that "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book (20:30).

3. JOHN WANTS US TO KNOW THAT JESUS FULFILLED THE OLD COVENANT AND BROUGHT THE NEW COVENANT

- 1:14, 17.
- John's huge purpose is to demonstrate that the promises made in the Old Testament are now coming to pass. (For example, Isaiah. 35:6 and John. 5:1-9; Ezekiel 47 and John 7:37-39; Ezekiel 34:1-24 and John 10:11). Jesus is the fulfiller of each major feast in the Jewish calendar: Tabernacles, Dedication and the Passover.

4. JOHN WANTS US TO KNOW THAT JESUS PROVIDED A WAY OF LIFE THROUGH BELIEF IN JESUS.

- 1:4, 12-13.
- In His death and resurrection Jesus powerfully made available a new way of life. John declares that Jesus took away the sin of the world (1:29), He is the bread of life for the world (6:51), He laid down His life for His sheep (10:11). Jesus gave up His life in place of others so that others could have life.
- Receiving this new life comes only by putting your trust in Jesus and by believing in Him, for He alone is the way, the truth and the life (14:6).
- For John, belief is not just a mental knowledge but rather an active trust. He only uses the verb form for "belief" (98 times), which is captured best in our word "trust." So, in John 4:49-50, it was only because the royal official trusted in Jesus that his son was healed. In John 9:7 and 38, it was only because the blind man trusted in Jesus that he went and washed in the pool of Siloam.

5. JOHN WANTS US TO KNOW THAT THE WAY IS OPEN TO ALL.

- 1:4, 13; 4:42; 8:12; 12:20-26.
- Again, God loves the whole world. His plan includes not just Israel, but the nations. At various points in the story, John points out individuals and groups that outside of Israel, yet still embrace belief in Jesus.
- This is easy to say now, because there are a lot of Gentiles in the church, but in the first century, this was a huge claim.

6. JOHN WANTS US TO KNOW THAT THOSE WHO BELIEVE ENTER LIFE NOW.

- 1:12, 16, 18.
- The terms "life" and "eternal life" are basically synonymous in John.
- When we hear the term "eternal life," we often think quantity, but John wants us to focus on a certain quality of life. While John does include the idea of future life to come (6:40, 54), he places great emphasis on the fact that Jesus changes life in the present. In John 10:10, Jesus announces that he came to give a certain quality of life. It's a changed life that begins at the moment of belief. In other words, our "salvation" from sin isn't just something that happens when we say a certain prayer or when we die and go to heaven. Salvation happens now and continually in this life. It is a radical reorientation of thoughts and actions. We, as followers of Jesus, live a different kind of life, life as it's meant to be lived.
- In addition to a relationship with the Godhead (4:21; 14:23), several benefits exist now for those who believe in Jesus: freedom (8:31-34), the Holy Spirit (7:37-38; 14:17, 26; 16:33), peace (14:26-17), love (3:16; 13:34-35; 15:12; 17:26), joy (15:11, 17:13). All of this shows that life with Jesus is a satisfying life, which leaves no deep longings (10:10).
- New life, a radical reorientation, produces fruit (John 15:1-10) and certain responsibilities for believers: sanctification (17:15), mission (see theme seven), sacrificial love (14:12, 23; 15:13).
- Of course, there is still one problem: sin is not fully defeated in this life. While eternal life is tasted now, it will come in full at the return of Jesus (13:33-14:3).

7. JOHN WANTS US TO KNOW THAT JUST AS THE FATHER SENT JESUS, JESUS SENDS OUT HIS FOLLOWERS.

- 1:6-7, 14; 7:37-39, 17:18; 20:21.
- We are to bring the message of life to the dark world, as it flows out of us to those around us (7:37-39). The mission started with Jesus and continues with His followers. Here are some examples of how that happens:
 - Teaching: Just as Jesus taught people about God, so do His disciples (18:20).
 - Works: Just as Jesus used works to minister, so do His disciples (14:12).
 - Words: Just as Jesus used words with works, so do His disciples (4:35).
 - Rejection: Just as Jesus experienced hatred and rejection from the world, so do His disciples for their testimony (15:18-19; 15:27-16:2).
 - Unity: Just as Jesus is one with the Father, so the disciples are to live in unity with one another (17:21-23).
 - Forgiveness: Just as Jesus brought forgiveness to many, so His disciples are to forgive others (20:23).
 - Shepherd: Just as Jesus was the Good Shepherd, so His disciples are to care for His sheep (21:5-7).
- This is quite a mission. In fact, it's impossible. Thankfully, Jesus promises to hear our prayer (14:12-14). And the Holy Spirit will help (16:7-16). He will bring about prayers that are in line with the character and desires of Jesus Himself.

8. JOHN WANTS US TO KNOW THAT DESPITE THE OVERWHELMING CREDENTIALS OF JESUS AS THE SENT SON OF GOD, JESUS WAS REJECTED BY MANY OF HIS OWN PEOPLE (1:11-12).

- Rejection: 1:11; 2:18; 5:16; 6:66; 7:30, 44; 8:48; 9:40, 10:31; 11:53; 12:37.
- Belief: 1:12; 2:11; 6:68-69; 7:43; 8:30; 11:45; 19:25-26; 20:28.
- Much of John's gospel seems like the people are putting Jesus on trial. Yet, many others did believe in Jesus, which creates an intriguing interplay of rejection and belief in almost every story.

SURVEY

Thanks for journaling through the book of John. Please take a few minutes and let us know what you thought about our John series by answering the questions below. When finished, you can tear along the dotted line and place your completed survey in the offering bag:

1. Did this journal actually aid you in your journey through John? How so?

2. What was your favorite aspect of the journal?

3. What suggestions do you have for future journals?



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