

JOHN 1-11

JOHN 1:1-18

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.

1. Verse 4 says that “life” was in Jesus. Does that statement refer to physical life, spiritual life, quality of life, or what?
2. Jesus’ own people rejected Him. Our familiarity with Jesus and Christianity can cause us to slouch into a coolness and insensitivity toward Him. How can we help each other stay on the cutting edge of the faith life?
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 journey we are invited into? What are some ways in which you need to become more of a child of God?

4. Jesus was full of grace and truth. What are some things about you that remind you that you need grace from God? What are some examples of how you need from Him a steady diet of truth? Why are both important?

5. Verse 16 speaks about us receiving from the fullness of Christ. Name something you have identified within yourself that He has added—you have received it through walking with Christ, it is not naturally in you.

JOHN 1:19-51

Jesus begins gathering his core group of followers with a simple, open question, "What are you seeking?"

1. John the Baptist's message was "Make straight the way of the Lord." What do you think this means? Why should you do this, and how do you do this in your own life?
2. While the leaders were focused on who John the Baptist was, John told them of someone greater. What should we admire about John in this moment and imitate (see John 3:30)? Why is this so important for us to imitate in God's great cause?
3. John states twice that Jesus was "the lamb of God." Several things are significant about this message. What are some of those things?
4. In verse 24-25 John is questioned as to why he is baptizing. In verses 29-34, why did John say he baptized? What do you think John meant when he said Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit? How did Jesus do that?
5. In verse 35-51 John reports the calling by Jesus of some of His disciples. What do you think Jesus looked for in the men He chose? Would you call yourself a disciple of Jesus? What makes one a disciple of Jesus?

JOHN 2:1-12

Jesus turns water into wine at a wedding. It is the first of seven "signs" that he performs in John's gospel. Jesus firmly steps out on the path to "the hour."

1. Mary plays a role in Jesus' understanding of God's timing in His life. What does this say about the importance of having others around you that help point you to what God has for you? Who are some of those people in your life?
2. If Jesus was part of the American Christian community today, what pressure might He feel to NOT do the miracle He did? What might have led Him to do it? How have your personal convictions about alcohol changed as you have walked with Christ? What about other substances?
3. Why do you think John may have included the detail about the water being in "six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification?" How does this add meaning to the story?
4. What about the detail John provides on the quality of the wine? Why is that significant and important to Jesus' purpose? (see verse 11)
5. This event was meant to foster trust in Jesus. It worked in the disciples. But how deep do you think their trust in Jesus was at this point? What are some areas in which your trust is strong in Jesus? What are some weak areas of trust in Him?

JOHN 2:13-25

Jesus cleanses the temple.

1. This is easily the angriest moment in Jesus' life that we have on record from His first visit to earth. What do you think offended Him the most about what was happening in the temple?
2. We know Jesus did not sin in this moment. What are some observations we can make about the kind of anger that God wants us to have? What should anger us more and when? Do you think people today generally see God as one who DOES have anger?
3. Some of the Jews ask Jesus to give a sign of His authority and right to do this. Why do you think Jesus did not make the sign clearer to them? Why the symbolic language? Do you think miracles convince skeptics?
4. Verse 24 says Jesus was not entrusting Himself to people. Why is this wise? In what sense should we trust people and in what sense should we be guarded? How do you practice being transparent and straightforward with others and at the same time careful?
5. What are some things you can do to get wiser about what is IN people? What can you do at the same time to become someone who loves people well? How do you know when you have loved someone well?

JOHN 3:1-21

Big questions for readers like who is "in" this new kingdom? How does one "get in?" are answered in this text. Jesus explains the new system, His kingdom, to Nicodemus. Also note that for the second time in John, we see the word "light" used figuratively a number of times in verses 19-21 (see also John 1:4-5). Make a note of these for future reference.

1. In American culture many people hear the term "born again." What do you think the average person understands that term to mean?
2. Why do you think Jesus used the hard-to-understand terminology of being "born again?" Based on what He says in verses 5-8, how would you explain to a friend what "born again" means and has meant in your life?
3. Jesus questions Nicodemus' ability to teach Israelites in verse 9. Formal learning in any field is essential. But what are some of the dangers of it? How has your personal approach to learning about faith-matters been good and how has it been not-so-good?
4. John 3:16 has been made very visible to many in America. Read verses 16-18. Share with each other what you think are the two most powerful thoughts in those verses.
5. What are some important things we should remember about the statements of Jesus in verses 19-21? Who are you praying for that seems to be like these verses describe, with zero interest in Jesus?

JOHN 3:22-36

What is something you can do to make yourself less in order to make Jesus more?

1. John's disciples are threatened by Jesus' increasing popularity. How has your faith in Jesus helped you NOT to feel threatened by smarter, more capable people? How has it helped you with insecurity in general? Why is this important in the Church?
2. John's attitude toward Christ in verse 30 is inspiring. What are some ways in which you would like to get smaller so that you would paint a bigger picture of Jesus for people?
3. Read verse 31. What are some characteristics of heavenly conversations? What are some characteristics of earthly ones?
4. Why do you think it is important for us to do as verse 33 says, set our seal to the fact that God is true? Why is our "seal" important to God and His purposes?
5. Jesus has given "the spirit without measure" (verse 34). What do you think is up when we feel like we need more of the Holy Spirit?

JOHN 4:1-45

Jesus came to give new life to ALL people who put their trust in Him.

1. What are some things you would love to accomplish more of through your conversations with others? What skills did Jesus need to develop in order to do what He did here?
2. What are some things Jesus does that give Him good rapport with this stranger? What are some risks He takes?
3. What are some of the “rabbit trails” that Jesus avoids in this conversation? What are some of the “rabbit trails” of today that we can get caught up in as we talk about Christianity?
4. From reading about Jesus in this passage, how should we deal with the sins and sinfulness of others as we talk with them about spiritual things?
5. If you were to develop a personal strategy for impacting people for Christ from this passage, what would some of the elements of that strategy be?
6. In verse 25, why did Jesus say “O righteous Father”? Why does Jesus want us to overhear this part of His prayer?

JOHN 4:45-5:47

Jesus heals two people in this section of text and some people had a problem about that. The real problem is not the these two "signs", but the claims Jesus was making about himself.

Jesus is God: the life-giver and judge. Trusting Him will lead us to

- honor Him
- experience increasing freedom from sin
- extend the invitation to others

1. This royal official was desperate for Jesus to heal him. Share a story of a time where you were desperate before the Lord. How did Jesus answer your pleading with him? Why do you think Jesus heals some and not others?

2. Why do you think Jesus asked the man in verse six "do you want to be healed?"

3. Do you think it was wrong for Jesus to tell the man to pick up his mat on the Sabbath? Why do you think the Jews thought this? What "rules" are there in Christianity that could actually hinder us from seeing the work of God in the lives of others? In other words, what mistake did the Jews make here in 5:16 and how can we avoid a similar mistake?

4. Read John 5:4... Does it bother you that it's not there? Is this a mistake in the Bible?

JOHN 6:1-15, 25-35, 66-71

For what sign are you waiting? Find your sustenance in Jesus.

1. The story of feeding the 5,000 is a fairly popular story. In reading it, what did you notice that you hadn't noticed before?
2. In verse 15, Jesus withdraws. Why wouldn't he want them to make him king?
3. In thinking about the crowd in verse 25-35, and then that same crowd in verse 66-71, John brings us to the key question: why do you follow Jesus? So... why do you follow Jesus? Do you follow him because he gives you things or because of who he is?
4. In verse 25-35, John is trying to get us to see the crowd's motivation for following Jesus. Why were they following Jesus?
5. Does Jesus "give in" to their motivations and give them understanding or does he dispute them?

JOHN 7:14-52

It's hard to hear God when I'm trying to quench my thirst for significance by chasing influence, experiences, images, titles, control, beauty, cool and the like.

1. Information is important for spiritual growth. But in verse 17 Jesus gives a prerequisite that allow us access to truthful information. What is it? Why is this important for us to remember as we help one another grow up spiritually?
2. In verse 24 we are told to judge rightly. What are some of the things Jesus has in mind when He says to judge rightly? How do we judge people and movements rightly without being judgmental?
3. Verse 27 reports a popular idea of the day about the Messiah that was dead wrong. How do we know it was wrong? What are some ideas about Jesus held by people you're around that are wrong? How should we go about addressing these?
4. In verse 37 Jesus uses the idea of thirsty the way He had used it in talking to the woman at the well (John 4). What do you think are the primary "thirsts" that people feel today that they are trying to satisfy?
5. In verses 45-52 John takes time to report some details of the Pharisee's dialog with those they had charged with arresting Jesus. What are some of the dangerous elements in their way of thinking?

JOHN 8:12-30

"Light" refers to truth, to the understanding of it and submission to it. "Darkness" refers to ignorance of truth or rebellion against it. Conform your thinking and your conduct to the "light."

1. Jesus calls Himself "the light of the world." What do you think He meant by that? How has He been a source of light to you? Do you think people are looking for light, as Jesus gives it?
2. What are some of the symptoms you have observed in yourself and others of "walking in the darkness?"
3. Last week we talked about judging. In verse 15-16 more is said about this. Jesus says He doesn't judge anyone, then says He does judge righteously (see also v 26). What does this all mean? What was the problem with the Pharisee's judgment?
4. Jesus said that God the Father bore witness of Him (v 18). What are some ways God bears witness of us as we live in the world?
5. What are some of the ways Jesus has recently enlightened you? What are the circumstances that seem to foster this experience in you?

JOHN 8:31-59

1. After reading this passage with all of the dialogue, do you find yourself sympathizing with the Jews or do you think Jesus is clearly understandable? How do you guard yourself against the posture of disbelief toward Jesus talked about in verses 37, 43, and 47?
2. Jesus says that freedom from sin comes by abiding in his word in verse 31-38. Does anyone have a time where Jesus revealed truth to you and you experienced a taste of freedom from enslavement to sin?
3. What is different between the freedom that America offers and the freedom that Jesus offers in verses 32-36? Would you tell someone that will be set free by Jesus the moment they believe in Him, or would you tell them through a relationship with Jesus that can be set free?
4. Do you think Jesus is being loving in verse 44-47? How do you think you would receive these words if he were to speak these to you? What lies are you currently living and how does Jesus want to handle those things in your life?

JOHN 9:1-41

Who is blind in this passage? How does this story of blindness further explain the discussion in chapter eight?

1. What do you think of Jesus' response in verse 3? Is Jesus saying that the *purpose* of the man's blindness was to display the works of God or is Jesus saying that the *result* of this man's blindness is to display the works of God? (In other words, should verse three be read like this: "but with the purpose that the works of God . . ." or like this: "but with the result that the works of God . . . "?)
2. What strikes you about the witness of the blind man both in verses 11-12 and in 25-34? Do you think he demonstrates a growing boldness?
3. In looking at their response to the healing (verses 13-34), what do you think is the main problem the Pharisees have with Jesus?
4. By the time we get to 39-41, who are the blind ones?

JOHN 10:1-21

Jesus alone is the door and the good shepherd: He provides access to God the Father and brings the provision of God the Father. He did this purposefully by laying down his life so that we could have life. As Jesus' sheep, we can rest in and respond to His love and power.

There are many Old Testament parallels that are helpful to see the deeper meaning of Jesus' words. For further study, see Jeremiah 23:1-6 and especially Ezekiel 34:1-24, which helps us see the connection between the end of John 9 and Jesus' words in John 10.

1. Jesus says in verse nine that if we enter the sheepfold by him, we will be rescued, we will have freedom and we will have sustenance. All humans would say they want those three things, but why and how are they trying to get them apart from Jesus?
2. Verse 10 is often quoted in Christian circles. As you read the context of this verse, what do you think Jesus means by "have life and have it abundantly"? How does this agree and disagree with our culture's view of abundance?
3. According to verses 11-18 what makes Jesus a good shepherd? Share a story of a time in your life when you experienced Jesus as a good shepherd.
4. How would you answer a Jehovah's Witness who says, "When Jesus says, 'I and the Father are one' Jesus is only claiming to be united in thought and purpose with God the Father? (For further consideration if necessary, check out John 8:58, Titus 2:13, and 1 John 5:20).
5. Do you know the voice of Jesus in your life? How are you training yourself to hear him better?

JOHN 10:22-42

The Feast of Dedication is still celebrated by Jewish people today; we know it as “Hanukkah.” It celebrates the events that happened around 165 BC, where the Jewish people, led by a man named Judas Maccabaeus, defeated the Greek/Syrian army in Jerusalem. The Greeks had desecrated the temple and turned it into a place of pagan worship. Judas and his soldiers recaptured Jerusalem and restored proper temple worship to Yahweh, consecrating it once again as holy. The people celebrated this consecration for 8 days, and have celebrated it every year since.

1. John makes it clear that the Jews want to kill Jesus because he claims to be God. Are they not understanding that Jesus is God because He is being unclear in his teaching or because of their pre-conceived notions about who God is? What pre-conceived notions has God broken in you that were keeping you from hearing God's voice?
2. In verses 27-28, Jesus says 6 little statements. Which one sticks out to you and why?
3. Verse 28-29 contain a clear and important teaching that once we are in Jesus' flock, we can never leave it. This is commonly expressed today as “you can never lose your salvation” or the “doctrine of eternal security.” Since becoming a follower of Jesus, have you ever had moments where you questioned your salvation? Why is it so hard for us to grasp that eternal life is a gift?

4. How would you answer a Jehovah's Witness who says, "When Jesus says, 'I and the Father are one' Jesus is only claiming to be united in thought and purpose with God the Father? (For further consideration if necessary, check out John 8:58, Titus 2:13, and 1 John 5:20).

5. What works of Jesus (either from his life, or works that you have seen today) speak to you most about his divinity, and confirm his identity?

JOHN 11:17-44

The raising of Lazarus is a central story and the sixth of seven "signs" in John's gospel.

1. This story has many different layers and interactions with Jesus. What statement of Jesus sticks out to you and why? What does this story reveal to us about our Shepherd?
2. We are definitely sympathetic to the statements of Martha and Mary (verse 21 and 32). Share a story of a time in your life where you feel as if Jesus didn't show up on time. Did he ever show up?
3. Look at verse 33-34. What do you think "moved" Jesus and what was He troubled about? Can you see Jesus entering into a sorrowful situation in your life and being moved? Or how else do you think he would react? Why?
4. In verse 41 some people obey Jesus and roll the stone away. Do you have the kind of faith to roll the stone away? What is prohibiting you from that kind of faith?