

# **“Come and See”**

A One Year Invitation to  
Believe in Jesus, Dwell with Jesus, & Love Like Jesus  
Through the Gospel of John

By Brandon Moore



For Mom and Dad

*Little did I understand in my morning grog  
as eyes looked through adolescent fog,  
why you consumed that morning feast,  
when the sun was still at its least.  
Now I'm learning what you truly ate,  
And the daily craving I appreciate.  
My urging appetite never satisfied,  
until at his breakfast I finally reside.  
His body and blood, my apprehension,  
to eat upon divine condescension.  
But in my memory, your living example,  
an indulgence of life abundant and ample.  
Thanks for preparing for each of us a seat,  
And at His table we will forever meet.*



# Introduction

## An Invitation to Dwell

I don't dwell well. My schedule is jam packed. One thing after another. I often say my favorite days are the ones where I get up, go as hard and long as I can all day long, then fall asleep. It is easy for discipleship to become momentary minutia in an endless schedule of things that *must* get done for my own self-satisfaction. Being a disciple of Jesus is important, so I usually give it priority in my schedule. It's allotted firm time slots between groceries and baseball games.

As I reflect now upon a full year in the Gospel of John, I recognize that dwelling with Jesus is not only important, but vital to discipleship. Rather than a task to accomplish, Jesus calls me to extended periods of presence with him. Through his word, prayer, conversation, relationship. Over tables and under duress. When I have no free time and have forgotten the hour, I am asked to dwell with him.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus calls on his believers to dwell with him. It is his simple and adamant hope throughout the Gospel. The Greek word translated "dwell" is *menw*. It means to remain, dwell, linger, stay. The idea is being without necessarily doing. It doesn't innately have a task or purpose associated with it. I know that this is uncomfortable for many of us, myself included. Yet, in the Gospel of John, Jesus calls us to dwell with him. In contrast to the immediacy of Jesus' action in Mark or the resolute approach of Jesus travels in the latter half of Luke, John gives a different perspective on Jesus. In John, Jesus lingers and remains. He dwells and asks us to loiter with him.

John 1:32 - "Then John [the Baptist] gave his testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain (*menw*, dwell) on him.'" Divine dwelling.

John 1:35-39 - "The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!' When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, 'What do you want?' They said, 'Rabbi' (which means 'teacher'), 'where are you staying (*menw*, dwelling)?' "Come," he replied, 'and you will see.' This is the initial invitation to discipleship in the Gospel of John. They wonder where Jesus dwells. Of course, on the one hand this is simply about where Jesus is staying. Yet, it is obviously more than that. When they ask him, he invites them to come and see!

In Luke and Matthew, the invitation of Jesus into discipleship is about witnessing the fulfillment of Isaiah. "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me" (Matthew 11:4-5.) This is the missional Jesus calling

his missional disciples. Of course, this is an accurate portrayal of Jesus, but John wants to remind us of another dimension to Jesus. The lingering Jesus. They ask where he dwells, and Jesus simply invites them to come and see.

This isn't reserved for the first chapter only. Jesus does this continually in the Gospel of John.

***In chapter two***, he is dwelling with his friends and family at a wedding in Cana and can't even be bothered to worry about the absence of wine.

***In chapter three***, he spends all evening in the dark with Nicodemus discussing new birth.

***In chapter four***, he lingers at a well talking to a woman with a bad reputation. She goes into town and calls all the people out to hear him. Jesus is supposed to be traveling, not hanging with the half-breeds. Yet, the chapter concludes, "when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay (menw, dwell) with them and he stayed (menw, dwelled) there two days. And because of his words many more became believers" (4:40).

***In chapter five***, he stops to chat with an invalid by the pool at the sheep gate. Despite his healing this man, the Jewish teachers of the law can't and won't believe in him. Why? Jesus says it's because "you have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell (menw, remain) in you... you refuse to come to me to have life" (5:37-38). Whereas the Samaritans dwelled with Jesus and heard the word that provoked belief, the Jewish leaders refuse to let the word dwell with them.

***In chapter six***, he sits down on the mountainside in the warm spring sunshine and feeds the multitude fish and chips. He calls his true disciples to himself, "whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains (meno, dwell) in me, and I in them" (6:56).

***In chapter seven and eight***, he is loitering in the temple courts teaching whoever pauses to listen. At the core of his teaching is a call to dwell with him. "If you hold (menw, remain, dwell) to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (8:31-32).

***In chapter nine***, you can find him chatting about sin and spiritual blindness as he heals a man born blind.

***In chapter ten***, he gives the beautiful imagery of sheep in a pasture being led by the only shepherd who will lay down his life for them. The Jewish leaders come to seize him but he heads "back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed (menw, dwell, remain) and many people came to him" (10:40-41).

***In chapter eleven***, even though he knows Lazarus is sick and going to die, "he stayed (menw, dwell) two more days" (John 11:6). He takes his time heading to Bethany and then lingers with Mary and Martha before finally raising Lazarus from the dead.

***In chapter twelve***, what does he do after he raises Lazarus from the dead? He eats a meal with his disciples in Bethany before taking a *donkey* into Jerusalem. As my father says, that is biblical

proof that sometimes it's appropriate to sit on your... donkey. Of course, as he teaches in the temple, he says, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay (menw, dwell) in darkness" (12:46). When you dwell with Jesus, you dwell in the light.

**Chapter thirteen through seventeen** is the account of one meal that Jesus shares with his disciples. As he dwells with them, he shares his heart by washing their feet. He teaches about love, self-sacrifice, and calls his disciples to "remain (menw, dwell) in me" (15:4). Just as they dwell with Jesus, so he promises to send the Spirit to "be with you (menw, dwell) forever... for he lives with you and will be (menw, dwell) in you" (14:16, 17).

**In chapter nineteen**, Jesus is hanging on the cross. He looks down and sees his mother and the disciple whom he loves dwelling there. When the others have fled, they have remained.

**In chapter twenty**, he spends time in the garden with Mary Magdalene after his resurrection. Though they both have a mission and she has to let him go, he still dwells there with her, not letting her leave the garden without seeing him.

**In the final chapter, twenty-one**, Peter asks the resurrected Jesus about the disciple who Jesus loves. Jesus replies, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." Jesus does not actually say, remain alive. The word translated "remain alive" is actually menw. Jesus says, "If I want him to dwell until I return..." The beloved disciples of Jesus dwell with Jesus.

I have found in my time in ministry, that there are very few of us who dwell well. Those who do, we think are odd or need to get a life. Ironically, in John's account of the Gospel, dwelling is essential to life. John 15 is the most extensive discourse in the Gospel according to John concerning dwelling with Jesus. As we dwell with Jesus, we dwell with his word hoping it will provoke belief.

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Dwell in me, as I also dwell in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must dwell in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you dwell in me.*

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you dwell in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not dwell in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you dwell in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

Too often we try to provoke spiritual fruit through process and discipline. Both elements are useful. Still, that isn't what creates fruit in the Christians life. If we are to be people abounding

with the fruit of the Christian life, we must dwell with Jesus. Actually, we must dwell *in* Jesus. What does that mean?

Two significant passages frame the Gospel of John. They give us insight into what it means to dwell with Jesus. Neither use the word *menw*, but they describe the concept well.

First, the opening verses of John are some of the most well-known verses in scripture. John echoes the great opening of Genesis 1:1, but centers the creation not in the activity of God but in the dwelling of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning" (1:1-2).

Note the contrast with Genesis, "In the beginning God *created*." Both accounts begin with the phrase "in the beginning." Yet, Genesis moves directly into the activity of God. God created. Whereas John moves directly into the relational indwelling of the Logos (Word) with God. Dwelling together. Relational together. In oneness. The Word in God. The second phrase, "the Word was with God" can actually be translated "was in God." This is the exact word that Jesus uses in John 14:23 in conjunction with another word we know:

*Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to [in, same word used in John 1:1] them and make our home [mone, noun form of the verb menw] with them.*

In the opening of John, the Father and the Son dwell together and disciples of Jesus are called into their dwelling. We are called to dwell with the Son in the Father as they dwell with us.

The second passage is one of my favorites from John. It comes in the final chapter. Jesus has already appeared to his disciples following the resurrection. Now, he appears to them again beside the lake. They have been out all-night fishing. They have caught nothing. They don't recognize Jesus until he tells them to cast their net on the other side. They pull in 153 fish and immediately know that he is Jesus. Around a charcoal fire on the shore, he calls out to them, "Come and have breakfast." They are now dwelling with the incarnate, resurrected Lord. Jesus is around a fire sharing breakfast with his friends, his brothers. They eat together, laugh together, talk together. They dwell together. Not on their scheduled time between work shifts on the boat, but at the calling of Jesus.

Jean Vanier's final words in his wonderful little book on the Gospel gives imagery to this scene and to the idea of dwelling with Jesus.

*As we have seen, the word dwell is at the heart of the Gospel of John. It began with the two disciples asking Jesus, "where do you dwell?" Jesus answered: "come and see" (John 1:38, 39). This Gospel has led us "to dwell in Jesus," to become his beloved friends. The last word of Jesus in the Gospel is that the message of John will remain, or dwell, until the end of time when Jesus returns. This is the end of the Gospel of John. The sun is rising, the sun of hope, because Jesus is clearly the Light of the world, and he is calling us all to become his beloved friends. (The Gospel of John, the Gospel of Relation, 126-27).*



Through the last year in the Gospel of John, I am learning to dwell with Jesus at his calling. To not be concerned about what I must do, but who I am to be, or, who I am to be with. We dwell together. My Father, his Son, his Spirit, his Church, and myself. We dwell. Somedays in his word. Somedays in my prayers, my silence. Somedays in my busyness. Often in my stillness. Some very special days at breakfast on the shore with no agenda but to share a meal and receive life.

My hope is that this resource will help you dwell with Jesus through the Gospel of John. It is designed to take you through the entire Gospel in 53 weeks. Each week will have a segment of John to read, meditate on, and converse in. This process is best done with a committed group of disciples whom you can meet for breakfast at the end of the week and share what you've experienced in your time dwelling with Jesus. If you commit to this guide, I cannot promise anything for you or your experience over the next year except that you will dwell with Jesus.

This resource was initially designed as a tool for South Hills Church of Christ in Helena, MT as we worked through the entire Gospel of John in a year. Looking back now, some of the elements I might have changed, and there is lots I would have added. Yet, it is where I was when I wrote it. At some point the revisions must stop. Likewise, I know that some of the citations in the additional resource section will become quickly outdated. I left them for those who might still find them useful. Following the "What is Included" section are some introductory notes that might be useful for understanding my perspective on the Gospel of John. I highly recommend reading through those before engaging in the notes.

## What's Included

The first page of each week, front and back, compose most of the resource. This is the primary guide that goes along with each week's reading. It consists of the following elements:

**Background:** These notes provide information on the social, economic, and religious setting of the passage. They focus only on information pertinent to the text.

**Themes:** This resource traces a variety of dominant themes throughout the Gospel such as water, seeking, light/darkness, etc.

**Commentary:** I have intentionally attempted to not provide much commentary on each text. This allows the reader to seek answers from their own reading. That having been said, there are certain circumstances in which confusing texts need commentary such as in exploring "who is the beloved disciple?" In those circumstances, I have attempted to offer a variety of views.

**For the Non-Believer:** In nearly every week's guide there is a section written to non-believers. For more information see "Purpose" below.

**Text Notes:** In creating every English version of John there is an immense amount of translation and textual research. Translation and text-criticism are highly technical and specialized fields that often only bog down the reader. The text notes concisely address textual issues and point out certain translation nuances that are specifically helpful for the reader.

**Additional Resources:** In each guide I provide the reader with supportive material in a variety of forms including sermons, videos, blogs, journal articles, and books.

**Devotional Thoughts:** It is important to always explore the implications of the passage for our current faith issues. Thus, each week there is a short devotional thought.

Following the main resource (front and back), there is a LIFE Group Discussion Guide. In our church, we refer to our small groups as LIFE Groups. This portion of the resource is intended to help a small group discuss that week's passage.

Also, we have included a printable, two sided bookmark to help guide you through the reading.

We also recommend journaling through the Gospel of John. Even if it's a few lines a week it can be helpful to have to look back on and is a fruitful exercise.

## Purpose

Most scholars agree that John 20:30-31 provides John's purpose in writing:

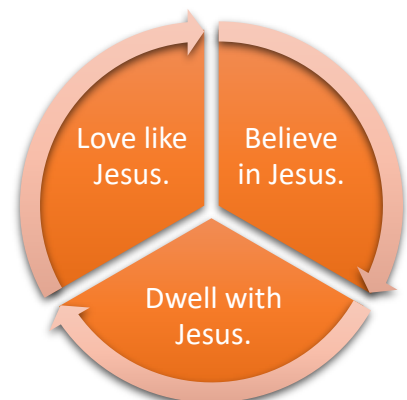
*Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

John wrote his Gospel to bring people to believe in Jesus as "my Lord and my God!" (20:28). This is the penultimate goal of John, and was developed by his time with Jesus as expressed repeatedly in the Gospel. Every sign and dialogue is intended to bring people to believe in Jesus.

Thus, throughout this resource there will be a section entitled "For the Non-Believer." This section is written to people who do not believe in Jesus, but is intended for the believer to read and utilize in their conversation with non-believers. It tries to utilize conversation and scenes from the Gospel of John alongside contemporary issues to provoke genuine conversations that lead to believe.

## Tripartite Discipleship

Many of us who are reading the Gospel of John already believe in Jesus. Does John then have a word for us about discipleship? I think so. In John, Jesus describes his expectations for his disciples through three concepts that we refer to as tripartite discipleship. Believe in Jesus. Dwell with Jesus. Love like Jesus. One could go for as to say: "Believe in Jesus; Dwell in Jesus; Love in Jesus." Yet, the first approach is easier to understand. Although initially these three dimensions of discipleship might appear to be steps to faith maturity, I believe that John actually presents them as a process of discipleship ever recurring as we follow Jesus.



**Believe in Jesus:** As already discussed, in the Gospel of John, believing is a premier theme. It is also an active theme. The author never uses the noun *pistis* (faith), but uses the verb *pisteuo* (believe) 98 times in the Gospel. In John's Gospel, the primary purpose or mission of Jesus' disciples is to believe in Jesus as is affirmed in the purpose statement of the Gospel, John 20:31. John makes it clear that eternal life for a disciple stems in belief, "the one who believe has eternal life" (John 6:47). There is a dynamic tension throughout the Gospel between Jesus revealing his glory (through the signs or teaching) causing people to believe in him and belief in him leading to beholding his glory.

This theme builds towards the Thomas narrative. The greatest way in which Jesus reveals the Father's glory is through his death, burial, and resurrection (John 12:28). Thomas declares that he will not believe unless he sees. Because the glory of God has been revealed in the death, burial, and resurrection, Thomas indeed has something to see. Seeing provokes believing, and yet, there is a form of believing that is more blessed than Thomas'. Indeed, Jesus says, "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." This is the state of present day disciples. We have not witnessed the resurrected Jesus in the way that the disciples have. Yet, we believe in Jesus. Throughout this resource there are a variety of historical, philosophical, and theological notes intended to help those of who have not seen, still believe.

**Dwell with Jesus:** We have already spent a considerable amount of time on dwelling with Jesus. The primary purpose of this guide is to help you dwell with Jesus.

**Love like Jesus:** It is a remarkable thing that Jesus does with Peter at the end of the Gospel. Peter has been a devoted follower of Jesus, willing even to die for him. Yet, until the resurrection Peter cannot understand that love is the ultimate expression of Jesus' divinity and Lordship. As Jesus reclaims Peter as his disciple, he asks Peter if he loves him. Connected with Peter's positive response is Jesus call for Peter to take care of Jesus' sheep. Love is always active in the Gospel of John. In my personal favorite chapter in John, chapter thirteen, Jesus shows his disciples the full extent of his love by washing their feet. As you work through the notes for that text you will realize that Jesus isn't just washing their feet. He is prophetically enacting his own death for them. The Jesus kind of love is self-giving, self-sacrificial.

## Background

There are more resources than we can name that will provide all the background information necessary for understanding the setting of John. Each week the guide will provide pertinent background information for understanding that week's passage. We highly recommend reading through this information *before* doing the journaling for a week. We begin with a few necessary pieces of background information that are not specifically given attention in the notes.

**Author:** John, the Apostle.<sup>1</sup> No gospel has seen as much debate over its authorship as the Gospel of John. Though the author did not name himself, there is abundant evidence to support this view. Most notably, there is written testimony from Ireneaus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, who "sat at the feet" of the Apostle John. He writes in the second century,

“Afterwards [i.e. after the other three Evangelists had written their work], John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence in Ephesus in Asia.”<sup>2</sup>

**Date:** Written from Ephesus sometime during the close of the first century. The *Rylands Fragment of John*, discovered in Egypt in 1920 is a small fragment from the Gospel of John. It can be accurately dated towards the early part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Likewise, a late date is supported by the theologically reflective nature of John’s account. Clement of Alexandria, an early church father wrote, “But, last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain the Gospel, being urged by his friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.”<sup>3</sup> *I believes there is enough external and internal evidence to show that John had an awareness of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as he was writing his Gospel.*

**Style:** Often we read the Gospel account like modern biographies, but they were not written that way. John was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus. He recounts historical events. Yet, he often describes events with certain literary style by using word plays, themes, and other literary devices. Likewise, he often describes historical figures such as Peter, Thomas, Mary as literary characters using Greco-Roman style. This is not a statement against the historicity of these people. Rather, it is John’s way of making points, grabbing the reader’s attention, and sharing the good news of Jesus. Attempts to historically harmonize John’s account with the accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are often confusing and forced. We believe it’s best to allow John’s distinct literary perspective to ruminate on its own and listen to what *he* has to say. If John knows Matthew, Mark, and Luke, he recognizes that an historical account has already been given. Rather than focusing on historicity, John focuses on theology. The reader should as well.<sup>4</sup>

**Audience:** It is unclear if John wrote to a specific social group.<sup>5</sup> What is clear is that John is leaving his account of the Gospel for those who will not “see” Jesus with their own eyes. The climax of John is the Thomas narrative in John 20. Thomas professes belief in Jesus only after having seen him raised from the dead. Jesus’ response is the culmination of the Gospel and reveals John’s intended audience. He says to Thomas, “because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Thus, John writes his account of the Gospel for us, those who haven’t seen and believe.

## Themes

Throughout this resource, you will find a multitude of themes and motifs that we will track across John. Some of these themes include light/darkness, water, and signs, but there are many more. Three of the themes we would like to call attention to in this section as they are important to be watching for in the Gospel.

**Glory (Honor):** Richard Baukham has done an excellent job of tracing the theme of glory throughout the Gospel of John.<sup>6</sup> He demonstrates that the writers of the Greek Bible intentionally adopt and modify the Greek term “doxa” (glory) to translate the Hebrew term “kabod.” This term can mean two things: honor or visible splendor. Baukham notes that for

most of the NT it means one or the other depending on usage, but John intentionally uses this phrase more than any other NT writer to hold both meanings simultaneously. This can only happen because the audible “word” has taken on the visible “flesh” (1:14). Though Moses heard God’s “kabod,” he could not see it (Exodus 33:12-34:7). Yet, John asserts in 1:14, “we have seen his glory,” and in 1:17-18, “no one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” In Jesus, both the honor and visible splendor of God have been made known.

I suggest that the reader of the Gospel use the word “honor” when reading “glory.” Whereas glory is often difficult to define, honor is tangible. Jesus’ primary concern in the Gospel is to honor the Father. This theme reaches its climax at the crucifixion where Jesus fully honors the Father and the Father bestows honor on the Son.

**Sign:** John doesn’t describe miracles, he describes signs. A miracle is a sign, but John wants to accentuate that Jesus didn’t perform miracles for the sake of the miracle. Rather, the miracles are signs that point to Jesus as the son of God. For example, John writes, “now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name” (2:23). The first two signs in the Gospel of John are numbered (John 2:11 and 4:54). Many scholars argue for seven major signs in the Gospel of John. Yet, John does not number to seven and there is little consensus to which miracles are the seven signs. Instead of forcing a number for significance, it is better to evaluate each sign in how it helps people believe that Jesus is the son of God.

**Hour:** The motif of Jesus’ hour is prevalent throughout the Gospel of John (2:1-4; 4:21-23; 5:25-28; 7:30; 8:20; 13:1). I will attempt to point out every mention of Jesus’ hour in the Gospel as many of the translations prefer the word “time” and translate it inconsistently. Throughout his ministry, Jesus’ hour has not yet arrived until John 12:20-29 when Jesus finally announces it has come. “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour” (12:20). On the first level, it is obvious that Jesus understands his hour to be the crucifixion, but, digging deeper, the concept of the hour is tied to glory. In the final prayer of Jesus with his disciples before the crucifixion, Jesus prays, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify (honor) your Son, that your Son may glorify (honor) you” (John 17:1).

In preaching on this theme, I used the metaphor of a giant boulder being balanced in place by only a small rock. These are referred to as balanced stones or balancing rocks and can be found across the world. A massive, weighty boulder is balanced on a singular stone. This little stone represents Jesus’ hour. The massive boulder represents the weight of his eternal mission and the magnitude of divine honor. With his “hour,” Jesus holds up the magnitude of God’s honor and the weight of his divine mission. *Jesus’ hour is the finite expression of infinite reality.*

*Case Study: All three of these themes are displayed in the opening miracle of John chapter two where Jesus turns water into wine. Jesus’ mother tells Jesus that the party has run out of wine. Jesus’ respond, “Woman, why do you involve me?... My hour has not yet come.” Despite this reluctance, Jesus indeed provides the party with more wine. Afterwards John tells us, “What*

*Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.” As his hour approaches, Jesus performs signs and begins to reveal his glory.*

## What's Not in John

Many commentaries focus on John's unique contributions to understanding the Gospel of Jesus. Yet, as I've dwelled in the Gospel of John I have been continually surprised by what John does not include in his account of the Gospel. As I have already stated, I believe that John knew Matthew, Mark and Luke's accounts, and he was not trying to rewrite these accounts. By accentuating what John leaves out, it gives us insight into what he wants to accentuate.

**Genealogy and Birth Narrative.** Though Matthew, Mark and Luke all have descriptions of Jesus birth narrative and Matthew and Luke give extended genealogies, John does not include either of these. Instead of a genealogy and birth narrative, John points to Jesus divine origin. Whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke all accentuate Jesus' humanness and move through the gospel towards a profession of his divinity. John attempts the opposite. He begins with Jesus' divine origin and moves towards his humanness. The Word is with God in the beginning and the Gospel ends with Jesus eating breakfast with his disciples by the shore of Galilee.

John accentuates Jesus' divinity. It seems likely that as John wrote late in the first century the church was primarily composed of second generation believers. They probably appreciated Jesus teaching, but might have downplayed his divinity. Much like our contemporary culture. Thus, John accentuates Jesus' divinity and has no place for a genealogy or birth narrative.

**Transfiguration and Temptation:** Unlike Matthew, Mark and Luke, John does not include any account of Jesus' transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36) or temptation (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). Once again, John is accentuating Jesus nature as the pre-existent word. Whereas the transfiguration is intended as an affirmation of Jesus' identity, John uses the more tangible signs and resurrection to point his audience to this conclusion. Likewise, in John, Jesus' temptation occurs within the dualism of his humanity and divinity. He is not tempted by an outside entity. As he faces his hour, Jesus gives insight into this dynamic, "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour" (12:27). Thus, his struggle is internal.

**Moral Teaching:** Jesus offers no extended moral teaching anywhere in the Gospel according to John. I didn't realize it until reading it in one setting. For example, John has no parables (moral teaching), no sermon on the mount, and no beatitudes. I think this is for two reasons. First, in John's account of the Gospel sin a big concept that humanity is unable to deal with on their own. John the Baptist declares about Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). Jesus himself says, "if you do not believe that I am he [the chosen one of God], you will indeed die in your sins" (8:24). It is not the moral rigorist who escapes the slavery of sin, but the one who believes in Jesus. Only Jesus is capable of conquering sin.

Second, according to John, the new morality of Jesus is love. Jesus tells his disciples, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (13:34). It’s not that John doesn’t believe we are called as disciples to live with a certain morality. Rather, John wants to accentuate that this morality is based in Jesus’ love not specific moral teachings or a new set of commandments. Thus, John uses the word love more than Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined.

**Lord’s Supper** - Interestingly enough, John does not include any narrative of the initiation of the Lord’s Supper. That having been said, there are two texts that point toward the Lord’s Supper. First, in the feeding of the multitude (Chapter 6), Jesus gives an extended sermon describing himself as the bread of life. He says, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (6:51). Then he adds in drink, “whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” (6:54). This appears to be a commentary on the Lord’s Supper. Second, in the narrative where one expects to find the Lord’s Supper, immediately preceding the crucifixion, there is a shared meal. Yet, at this shared meal, Jesus washes his disciple’s feet. Whether this is the same meal as the initiation of the Lord’s Supper is unclear. (Was the Lord’s Supper initiation even a singular occurrence?) It is clear that John wants us to understand the love activity of washing feet was also centered at the table.

## The Believing Experience

John writes in an engaging style. A slow reading through the book takes you into the life of the characters and their interaction with Jesus. Kelli O’Brien in his intriguing article on the Gospel of John, “Written that you Might Believe: Narrative Rhetoric and John 20,” argues that John intentionally uses a style of rhetoric to bring the reader into the experience of the narrative. He argues:

*The Fourth Gospel is not simply a report of others’ experience, but it provides the possibility of substitute experience for the reader. The narrative strategies of the Gospel show, rather than merely tell, the reader what believing is, creating an experience for the reader that is certainly not the same as being there but can be significant nonetheless.<sup>7</sup>*

Simply stated, John writes for us to experience the process of believing through Jesus’ interaction with many people in the Gospel. Thus, John recounts a multitude of personal encounters with Jesus: John the Baptist, Philip, Andrew, Peter, Nathanael, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the royal official with sick son, the man invalid for thirty-eight years, the man born blind, Lazarus, Martha, Mary (Lazarus’ sister), Mary (Jesus’ Mother), Pilate, Annas, Mary Magdalene, and Thomas.

As you read through the stories, try to experience coming to believe from each of these peoples perspectives. Journaling is helpful as my friend demonstrates in her reading of the Samaritan woman and the accompanying notes from John 4:1-26:

*I question whether she was flirting with Jesus. I have never perceived it that way and don't get that feeling from the text. I have always thought that she was being sheepish with him, not wanting to admit that she had no husband and was living in sin with a sixth man. I have probably attempted in some way to find my identity through all my relationships [like the Samaritan woman] and not just male, female ones too. Part of my identity is mom and grandma, wife and friend, daughter, etc. But like the Samaritan woman with Jesus, until someone tells you that you're wrong and those don't give you identity you have no clue. I was not raised to find my identity in Christ [like the Samaritan woman]. This is foreign to me. But like her, I can recognize today that my identity is in Christ because I am first a child of God... above all, Christ needs to be first in our life because he will be there when no one else is.*

## Resources

Every week I used several resources including multiple journal articles, sermons, essays, and books. Yet, the following works I found most beneficial and used *every single week*. They are often quoted in the resource.

Craig Keener. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. 2 Volumes. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

This is the single most exhaustive work on the Gospel of John. It's highly academic, but extremely useful for the nitty gritty of the text. For the serious student of the text. Most will find it overwhelming.

Andreas J. Kostenberger. *Encountering John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 1999.

This is quickly becoming the conservative go to introduction to study John. It is a valuable resource that merges scholarship and accessibility. A first buy for a more scholarly approach.

F. F. Bruce. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

I have always appreciated the scholarship of the late F. F. Bruce. This is a very accessible, older work that is useful but not necessary. It is best used as a quick reference.



Richard Bauckham. *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.

Bauckham is my favorite Johannine scholar. The way he looks at the Gospel is stunning. Undoubtedly, he is a man who has dwelled with Jesus. This book is not a difficult read, but it can be technical. It simply explores themes in John such as sacraments, dualism, and glory. Yet, my favorite reading on the Gospel of John comes from the first chapter on “individualism.” It altered the entire way I read the Gospel of John. Highly recommended for the serious student.

N. T. Wright with Kristie Burgland. *John: 26 Studies for Individuals and Groups*. Downer’s Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2009.

This is one work in a series of short discussion guides by N. T. Wright and others. It is useful, but the questions are very leading. It is best used if leading a class or discussion group.

Jean Vanier. *The Gospel of John: The Gospel of Relationship*. Franciscan Media, 2015.

I had low expectations for this book. It was a throw in on Amazon when I was just looking for a few more sources. Yet, it became one of the readings I looked forward to the most each week. Jean Vanier is a Catholic, Canadian theologian who founded the L’Arche Communities, which are a series of homes and resources to support those with intellectual, physical, and learning disabilities. This is a highly devotional book that really draws you into dwelling with Jesus. Highly recommended.

Randy Harris and Greg R. Taylor. *Daring Faith: Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John*. Abeline, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2016.

I have always been a big Randy Harris fan and this book was published about half-way through our year in the Gospel of John. It balances solid scholarship with practical reflections and challenges. Though it isn’t my first recommendation for this style (see Jean Vanier), the reader won’t be disappointed.

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<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion see Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 81-138.

<sup>2</sup> David DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, & Ministry Formation* (Grand Rapids: Intervarsity, 2004), 391.

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.14.7, quoted in DeSilva, 394.

<sup>4</sup> For a more full discussion see Andrea J. Kostenberger, *Encountering John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 1999), 29-34.

<sup>5</sup> See Keener, 140-232.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 43-62.

<sup>7</sup> Kelli S. O’Brien, “Written That You May Believe: John 20 and Narrative Rhetoric” *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 67 (April 2005): 284-302.

## **THANKS**

I am incredibly grateful to Jean Falley for her immense amount of tireless work editing this guide both on a week to week basis and in forming it into this final form. Throughout this project she continually displayed the patience of God in her patience with my many, many mistakes and my occasional efforts to derail this project. When I said something was “good enough,” she would kindly give me a disapproving look without a single word and wait for my repentance. Without her faithful work and lofty expectations this project would never have been completed. Thanks Jean!

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN JOHN 1:1-18

## NOTES:

### Background

**Logos** - The poetic loftiness of John's writing adopts the Greek concept of the "logos" in association with the Jewish Wisdom Literature concept of "wisdom." This more than a "word." It is a transcendent concept of truth, knowledge, and wisdom. The stoic philosophers of John's day taught about the "logos" as the divine reason. They taught that each person should live in line with this "logos." Thus, John adopts this concept as he sees its fulfillment in the Son of God.

**Eyewitness** - Though it has seen much debate, we hold the author of John is John the apostle (see "dig deeper"). John, son of Zebedee, was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus. John's telling of the Gospel was written sometime between the destruction of the temple in AD 70 and the end of the first century. Thus, John has spent many years teaching and reflecting on his time with Jesus.

### Non-Believers

**John's purpose** for writing is given in 20:30-31, "Jesus performed many other signs...which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John wants people to come to believe and have life in Jesus. Throughout this study, we hope to explore how each section is intended to provoke belief in those who do not believe.

**Transcendent Principle** - In nearly every form of philosophy in the history of the world there is some concept of a transcendent principle or law: Plato's "invisible," Descartes' "thought," Locke's "rationalism," Newton's universal laws, etc. John begins his discourse with this prevalent transcendent principle defined as "the word." Do you believe there is a transcendent principle? Does that principle have an origin? Is it possible for that principle to become flesh?

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE WEEK 1

### THURSDAY-SATURDAY

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### SUNDAY

**Work through the provided notes.**

### MONDAY-TUESDAY

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### WEDNESDAY

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to Richard Bauckham and Ben Witherington III discuss Jesus and the Jewish concept of monotheism.**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qq-IfhdXDzg>**

# DIG DEEP

## TEXT NOTES:

- 1.1** - “with God” (Gk. *Pros*). The preposition *πρός* (with) implies not just proximity, but intimate personal relationship.
- 1.5** - “shines” (Gk. *Phanei*). Each verb up to this point has been in the past tense, but suddenly John switches to the present, active tense.
- 1.11** - “his own/his own” (Gk. *Idia/Idioi*). There is a subtle nuance here which is clear in Greek, but difficult in English. The first “his own” (*Idia*) refers to a thing or place, but the second “his own” (*Idioi*) refers to people. Maybe, “he came to that which was his own (place), but his own (people) did not receive him.”
- 1.14** - “made his dwelling among us” (Gk. *Eskenosen*). This is the word for tabernacle, clearly taken from the Old Testament. Thus, “the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.” See Exodus 25:8.
- 1.18** - “the one and only son” (Gk. *Monogynes*). Used in the OT to specifically refer to an only son, but can also mean unique.
- 1.18** - “is in closest relationship” (Gk. *Kolpos*). This word literally is translated as “in the bosom of.” It is an idiom referring to the most intimate place an infant is held in the lap of their parent.

## Background

**John vs. Synoptics** - Matthew, Mark, and Luke (what scholars call the synoptic gospels) are very similar in structure, style and wording. They routinely borrow from one another verbatim. John is surprisingly unique in comparison to the other three Gospels in his portrayal of Jesus, just as he was unique in his relationship with Jesus during his life. Differences include a lack of the Lord’s Supper narrative, an emphasis on eternal life instead of the kingdom of heaven, extended discourses rather than short sayings, and an extended farewell discourse (chapters 13-17) in lieu of the sermon on the mount. As you read John, be thinking about the different voice that he uses to describe Jesus in comparison to the synoptic Gospels.

**Authorship** - John son of Zebedee. *External Evidence*: Written testimony from Ireneaus who was a disciple of Polycarp who “sat at the feet” of the Apostle John. He writes in the second century, “John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence in Ephesus in Asia.” *Internal Evidence*: John appears to include himself within the Gospel as “the beloved Disciple.” The author claims to be an “eyewitness” (1:14; 19:35; 21:24-25), and demonstrates an accurate knowledge of Jewish customs, Semitic literary style, and Palestinian topography.

## DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT FROM THIS WEEK’S TEXT:

### CREATION

John starts with “En arkos” (In the beginning), which is taken directly from the opening lines of Genesis 1:1 in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). What other language from Genesis 1 do you find in the beginning of John?

Why do you think John starts this way?

What is he trying to teach about Jesus?

### GRACE & TRUTH

After years of reflection, John summarizes the character of Jesus, as full of “grace and truth” (1:14). How has God’s relationship with you been characterized by grace and truth? In the same way how is your relationship with others defined by grace and truth? What relationships in your life need more grace or more truth?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 1:1-18

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 1

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### Opening Question

- What different roles do you fill on a day-to-day basis?

### In the Word: Read John 1:1-18

- What different things does this passage teach us about Jesus?
- What is the difference between the way John starts his account of the Gospel, and the way Matthew, Mark, and Luke start their account of the Gospel? *Take a look at the other Gospels, if needed.*
  - Why do you think John starts his account of the Gospel with “the word” or “logos” instead of Jesus?
- Many scholars have said that verse 14 is one of the most significant verses in all of scripture. Why is this?

### In Our Walk

- John says that the world Jesus made did not recognize him. Have you ever not been recognized or been rejected by someone that you loved? What was that experience like?
- Jesus is defined as being full of “grace and truth.” Why is it important for our lives to be defined by a balance of grace and truth?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- In 1974, Morna D. Hooker published an influential paper on the prologue of John. She contended that the phrase in verse 16, which the NIV translates “grace in place of grace already given” should be read in light of Exodus 33:13. Exodus 33:13 in the LXX (Septuagint: Greek version of the OT) is best translated, “Now therefore, I pray you, if I have found ‘grace’ (LXX) in your sight, let me know your ways, that I may know you, so that I may find ‘grace’ (LXX) in your sight” (NET Bible). How does this help us better understand what John is saying in verse 16?
  - Where else do you see an Exodus background in the prologue of John?

### Closing Prayer

- Praise God that in his magnificent wisdom and superior nature he sent his son.
- Pray that we might be people of truth and grace.



# The Gospel according to John John 1:19-34

## Notes:

### Background

**John the Baptist** - The first person brought forward in the Gospel of John is John the Baptist. We know from other texts that John was a distant cousin of Jesus. He lived in the wilderness off of locusts and honey as was a common practice for anyone living in the wilderness. He preached repentance and baptism in order to escape God's forthcoming judgment. Itinerant preachers weren't unique to the Ancient world, but what appears to have set John apart was his view of full immersion baptism in line with forgiveness. Though there are some examples of this general concept in both Israel communities such as the Essenes and Roman mystery rites, John is distinct in his teaching. John introduces John the Baptist for both historical and theological reasons. First, the acknowledgement of John the Baptist's ministry alongside the baptism of Jesus sets the start of the ministry of Jesus in its historical place. John the Baptist was a well-known, itinerant preacher during the start of the first century. His distinctive practice of baptism would easily identify him. Second, John the Baptist is the initial "witness" of Jesus in line with the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3 as quoted in John 1:23) and Malachi (4:5 as expressed in the questioning of John the Baptist in 1:21). John the Baptist is important as the prophetic type who points to Jesus as Messiah.

### Non-Believers

**Before and After Witness** - It was necessary in both Jewish and Roman law for there to be two witnesses for proof in a judgment or court setting. John adapts this principle in his account of the life of Jesus right off the bat. He provides two sets of witnesses: John the Baptist, and then the disciples of Jesus. Thus, John establishes a witness that is before and during Jesus' ministry and then witnesses who are during and after Jesus ministry. Why would the author want to identify witnesses? Why would or wouldn't John the Baptist be a credible witness?

## Weekly Schedule Week 2

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**

**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thought on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to the kid oriented video on John the Baptist by Crossroads Kids Club. Search youtube for John the Baptist or go directly @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NMHOLPWeTM>**

# Dig Deep

## Text Notes:

- 1.21** - "Elijah." It was common teaching by second temple Judaism that Elijah was thought to return based on 2 Kings 2:11 and Malachi 4:5. Although John the Baptist denies he is Elijah in this passage, Jesus affirms that role in Matt. 11:14. Surely John would not have been so boastful as to claim himself as the Elijah that was to come.
- 1.28** - "Bethany." This cannot be the Bethany that is near Jerusalem, see 10:40 in line with 11:1, 17-18. Origen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. began a tradition of translating this Bethbara (KJV). Yet, there is no textual evidence to support his decision, and the exact location that John is referring to is unknown despite much speculation.
- 1.32** - "remain" (Gk. *Meno*). John in his Gospel and Letters uses this word nearly half of all the occurrences in the NT. For John this significant word signifies permanency. Here it specifically signifies the permanency of the Holy Spirit with Jesus.
- 1.34** - "Chosen One of God/Son of God" (Gk. *Eklektos/Uoios*). This is a difficult textual variation with more manuscripts saying son, but the earliest saying chosen one. For a variety of reasons, I lean towards chosen one as it appears to be more consistent with the prophetic theme of John the Baptist, and fits better alongside his teaching of the Holy Spirit immediately before.

## Background

**Who is Jesus?** - John the Baptist provides three ample descriptions of Jesus in his testimony about him.

**1. Jesus is "he who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me" (vs. 15).** Still within the prologue, John's testimony serves as support to the eternal and pre-creation nature of Jesus. This is alluded to in vs. 26-27.

**2. Jesus is the "Lamb of God" (vs. 29).** Jean Vanier writes, "A lamb is not something strong—on the contrary, a lamb is small, weak, and at the mercy of others. Yet, Jesus is called the *lamb*. For the Jewish people, the symbolism of the lamb was familiar and profound...God warned the Jews to mark their doorways with the blood of a lamb, so that when God sent the angel of death to kill the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, the angel would pass over the houses marked with the blood of the lamb. This is Passover...This is the great moment of liberation...The lamb is also spoken of in Isaiah 53, which describes the vision of the suffering and sorrowing servant, who prefigures Jesus crucified. There, too, we discover how the Lamb will liberate us."

Jean Vanier, *The Gospel of John: The Gospel of Relationship*, 7-9.

**3. Jesus is the "chosen one of God" (vs. 34).** This title is affirmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus in reference to Isaiah 42:1. See text note above.

## Weekly Devotional: John 1:20

### "I Am Not"

When the political and religious leaders of Jerusalem interrogate John the Baptist, the first thing he tells them is "I am not the Messiah." We live in a culture that claims each of us is our own messiah; that to be truly human is to forge our own path and be true to our own identity. In other words, we must rescue ourselves from the bondage of family, culture, etc. so that we can be truly who we want to be. Before John could recognize Jesus as the Messiah, he had to deny that he himself was the Messiah. The same must be true in our lives.

*In all dimensions of your life can you say, "I am not the Messiah?"*

*Why is it so difficult for us to acknowledge that we are not the Messiah?*

*How do our culture and more specifically social media influence us towards believing we are our own Messiah?*





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 1:19-34

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 2

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### Opening Question

- Have you ever met someone famous? What were they like?

### In the Word: Read John 1:19-34

- We know that John is the latest gospel, which means Matthew, Mark, and Luke are already known accounts. What do we know about John the Baptist from Matthew, Mark, and Luke? *If needed, turn to Luke 1:5-25, 57-66; 7:18-35, Mark 1:1-8 and Matthew 3:1-12.*
- What is John the Baptist's purpose in this text?
- Many scholars point to the political undertones of this text. In what ways is this text political in the ancient world?
- John initially describes Jesus as the "Lamb of God." Of all the terms available to him, why does he choose this one?

### In Our Walk

- When the political and religious leaders of Jerusalem interrogate John the Baptist, the first thing he tells them is "I am not the Messiah." We live in a culture that claims each of us is our own messiah; that our identity is formed through self-realization. In other words, we must rescue ourselves from the bondage of family, culture, etc. so that we can be truly who we are. Before John could recognize Jesus as the Messiah, he had to deny that he himself was the Messiah. The same must be true in our lives.
  - In what areas of your life do you struggle with wanting to be the Messiah?
  - Why is it so difficult for us to acknowledge that we are not the Messiah?
  - How does social media influence us toward believing we are our own Messiah?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- There is a major manuscript disagreement in verse 34 between "chosen one of God" or "Son of God." Most manuscripts have "son of God" but some earlier manuscripts have "chosen one of God." This discussion is probably beyond our level of expertise. Are either titles conceivable and consistent titles for Jesus?
  - If Jesus is the "chosen one of God," this title is probably taken from Isaiah 42:1. What relationship do you see between verses 32-34 and Isaiah 42?
  - If Jesus is the "son of God," this title is probably taken from Genesis 22. What relationship do you see between the testimony of John the Baptist and Genesis 22?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we will have the strength to admit we are not the Messiah.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 1:35-51}

## Notes:

### Background

**Discipleship** – Two historical/cultural points about discipleship should be made. First, it was not unusual for teachers such as John the Baptist to have disciples, but it was unusual, though not unheard of, for these teachers to recommend their disciples follow others. For example, Antisthenes is reported to have recommended disciples to follow Socrates. Still this was a very rare occasion that had to do with the awesomeness of the teacher recommended. Thus, John is testifying again to the greatness of Jesus by recommending his disciples follow Jesus. Second, discipleship was often seasonal. In Greek culture teachers would carry disciples from October to June and it was common in other cultures to follow an agrarian calendar. Thus, it is not inconsistent for Andrew to be both a fisherman (Matt. 4:18) and a disciple of John (1:40).

### Themes

**Dwell** - The disciples first question to Jesus is “Where are you staying?” The word for staying is “menw,” which is literally translated “to dwell.” This is the same word that is used in 1:33 for “remain” concerning the Holy Spirit on Jesus. John uses this word over 40 times in this Gospel and another 27 in his Letters, which accounts for nearly half of all the uses in the NT. We will point out this word in every significant occurrence. Watch for the developing theme of “to dwell” or “remain.”

### Non-Believers

**Seeking** – As I write this, the Powerball has risen to 1.5 billion dollars. Americans have spent 2.6 billion dollars to win it. There is no doubt that people seek wealth. If we are honest with ourselves, within the innate nature of who we are we are seeking something: wealth, belonging, love, respect, power, etc. In a literal translation of John 1:38, Jesus says, “What are you seeking?” Jesus’ teaching begins out of the acknowledgment that everyone is seeking something, and he contends that he is what they are seeking. What are you seeking? Can you even name it? Is it possible that Jesus could be who you are seeking? How would you know unless you know him?

## Weekly Schedule Week 3

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**See the great introductory video on The Messiah @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dEh25pduQ8>**  
**Or search The Bible Project Messiah on Youtube.**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 1:38** - "Want" (Gk. Zeteo). Literally translated, "what do you seek?"
- 1:38** - "Rabbi" (Gk. Rabbi). Simply means "teacher." A common term of respect not to be over analyzed.
- 1:39** - "Four in the afternoon." Literally, "it was the tenth hour." The Jewish day starts at our 6am. Thus, 4pm.
- 1:42** - "Cephas/Peter." Only John gives the actual Greek name Peter. This word means rock.
- 1:47** - "In whom there is no deceit." See Psalm 32:2.
- 1:48** - "Fig tree." The fig tree denotes historical accuracy, but also alludes to prophetic symbolism. The fig tree stood for peace and plenty (Mic. 4:4; Zech. 3:10). It might also reference Proverbs 27:18.
- 1:51** - "you, you" (Gk. *umeis*). This is the plural form of the word. It changes significantly the understanding of who Jesus is talking to. Throughout the conversation with Nathanael, the "you" has been singular but here suddenly it changes to the plural "all of you."
- 1:51** - "Son of Man" (Gk. *Uoin tou anthropou*). Son of Man is used thirteen times in John. For background to this title see Daniel 7:13-14.

## Background

**Open Heaven and Son of Man**- Jesus tells the whole group (see note on vs. 51) that they will see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." "The 'open heaven' was the dream of every Jewish apocalyptic. This spawned an entire genre of literature in the intertestamental period where enigmatic figures such as Enoch are depicted as traversing heaven and reporting what they see... but, as Jesus himself asserts in John 3:13, 'no one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man.' This Son of Man, in turn, is none other than the mysterious figure of Daniel 7:13... what Jesus claims is that he is the Son of Man prophesied in Daniel, the one who has seen God and has explained him (1:18), the one who was 'lifted up' at the cross (3:13 cf. 8:28; 12:32) and the one who will return in all his glory (Mt 26:64)." Kostenberger, *Encountering John*, 71.

**Ascending and Descending** - Likewise, the reference in vs. 51 to ascending and descending comes from Genesis 28:12 where Jacob has a dream of the angels ascending and descending a ladder between earth and heaven. Within this dream God speaks directly to Jacob, giving him the promise of Abraham. Upon awaking Jacob exclaims, "How awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." Jesus is saying that he is now the "place" of the spoken word of God, and that he is the "place" that fulfills the promise given to Jacob, first given to Abraham. Where heaven ascends and descends with earth is in the person of Jesus.

## Devotional Thoughts John 1:41-42

### New Name

Jesus says to Simon in vs. 42, "you will be called Cephas." As Simon enters into discipleship of Jesus, he is given a new name. A name is about identity, and throughout the story of scripture, God continually gives his disciples new names. In Scripture, who else does God rename? Why is renaming significant in the eyes of God? In what ways has God given you a new name?

### Brought to Jesus

Reflecting on vs. 40-42, F. F. Bruce writes, "Andrew, then, brought his brother to Jesus; and in later years, when Simon Peter performed such mighty works in the name of Jesus... Andrew must have recalled with deep satisfaction that day when he brought his brother and their Master together. No one can foresee, when he brings a man or woman to Jesus, what Jesus will make of that person."



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 1:35-51

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 3

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### Opening Question

- Who has served as a mentor in your life?

### In the Word: Read John 1:35-51

- In verse 38, Jesus literally replies, “what are you seeking?” What is the significance of this question for the beginning of the Gospel of John?
- What would it have meant for Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathaniel to become disciples of Jesus?
- For Andrew, in his place and time, what did it mean for him to call Jesus the messiah?
- What does Jesus mean when he says in verse 51 when he says, “you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man?”

### In Our Walk

- Jesus says to Simon in verse 42, “you will be called Cephas.” As Simon enters into discipleship of Jesus, he is given a new name. A name is about identity. Throughout the story of scripture, God continually gives his disciples new names.
  - In Scripture, who else does God rename?
  - Why is renaming so significant in the eyes of God?
  - In what ways has God given you a new name?

### For Non-Believers ?

- This wonderful passage also teaches us a lot about introducing people to Jesus. Why do you think Andrew is so excited to introduce his brother Cephas to Jesus?
  - What does the story of Andrew and Cephas teach us about bringing people to Jesus?
  - What does the story of Philip and Nathanael teach us about bringing people to Jesus?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we will be bold enough to introduce our friends to Jesus.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 2:1-11}

## Notes:

### Background

**Wedding Festivals** – It was common in both Jewish and Greek cultures to have an extended period of wedding celebration often lasting for seven days. Close friends would stay throughout the entire celebration. The blessings for the Bride and Groom were often repeated every day for those that came later in the week. Weddings were so important in rabbinic teaching that the groomsman and his wedding party were often allowed to miss important purification times on behalf of the wedding. The invitations were a game of social status in which the groom's father would host as many as he could afford. The quality of the festivity, often determined by a party judge (2:9), determined the social standing of the host for years to come. It would not have been unusual for a traveling teacher such as Jesus to be invited, although Mary's inside information concerning the wine (2:3) might indicate a closer family relationship with the host.

### Themes

**Signs** – This is the first of seven major signs that John uses to display Jesus' glory (1:11). All seven signs occur in the first part of John which describes his public ministry. These signs are intended to display Jesus' glory (see Dig Deep) and provoke belief in his disciples. It is noteworthy that the first sign took place "on the third day" and involved transforming the ceremonial jars of water to wine (2:5-7), bringing honor to the someone who would be shamed (2:9-10), and continuing the party.

### Non-Believers

**"Believed in Him"** – John makes it very clear that part of Jesus' ministry is the working of miracles, but the miracles aren't Jesus' ministry. Instead, he says that the miracles are "signs" that confirm Jesus' claims about himself. Jesus claims that there is one God that is transcendent of this world. This God has made himself known by taking on the human experience in the person of Jesus. In the simplest terms, Jesus claims that he is God. Thus, he does miracles as proof that he is God. I have only one question for you this week, what would it take for you to believe that Jesus' is God?

## Weekly Schedule Week 4

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**See the great introductory video on The Messiah @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dEh25pduQ8>**  
**Or search The Bible Project Messiah on Youtube.**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**2:1-** *“Third day.”* - This cannot be the third day since the narrative started.

The third day appears to have been a common idiom such as “the day after tomorrow” that was often used. It seems probable that it is either referring to the third day since the disciples began following Jesus, or is used by John as a literary device to draw attention to the resurrection.

**2:4** - *“Woman”* (Gk. *gunē*). Not a term of disrespect or dishonor, but a common term to refer to a woman of status. Yet, it would still be unusual for a son to use in reference to his mother.

**2:6** - *“used by the Jews for ceremonial washing.”* Literally, “for the purification of the Jews.”

**2:11** - *“Believed”* (Gk. *Episteusan*). Verbal form of the word “faith.” To have faith, gain faith, or believe. In John, faith is always a verb.

## Theme

**“My hour has not yet come”**- In 2:4, Jesus seems short with his mother when she suggests that he should solve the issue of the lack of wine. Jesus’ response is indicative of his foreknowledge concerning what the public display of his power will provoke. Throughout John, Jesus consistently speaks about his hour, which at first has not come (7:30; 8:20) but finally arrives as he approaches Jerusalem for the final time (12:23, 27; 13:1, 17:1). This expression describes the point in which his ministry finds fulfillment in the excruciating experience of the cross.

**Glory** – Another theme seen in this text is Jesus displaying his “glory.” Richard Bauckham (*Gospel of Glory*, 43-62) has done an excellent job of tracing the theme of glory throughout the Gospel of John. He demonstrates that the writers of the Greek Bible intentionally adopt and modify the Greek term “doxa” (glory) to translate the Hebrew term “kabod.” This term can mean two things: honor or visible splendor. Bauckham notes that for most of the NT it means one or the other depending on usage, but John intentionally uses this phrase more than any other NT writer to hold both meanings simultaneously. This can only happen because the audible “word” has taken on the visible “flesh” (1:14). Though Moses heard God’s “kabod,” he could not see it (Exodus 33:12-34:7). Yet, as John has already asserted in 1:14, “We have seen his glory” and in 1:17-18 “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” In Jesus, both the honor and visible splendor of God have been made known. This demonstrates itself in the ministry of Jesus by his historical, metaphorical, and miraculous signs. In these signs, Jesus demonstrates both the honor and visible splendor of God, and people come to believe in him as the revelation of God because he is himself God.

## Devotional Thoughts John 2:1-11

### The Discreet Miracle

In his first sign Jesus does not work in the open. Rather, he uses the servants of the banquet as the hands by which the water is turned into wine. Though Jesus performs the miracle, the honor of the miracle is bestowed upon the host of the feast by the master of the banquet. This is so rich. Can I be the hands of Jesus without the need for recognition or honor? Do I do the will of God for my own glory or out of God’s glory within me? Do I do the will of God for my own honor or to honor others?

### The Best Wine

It is not simply that Jesus transforms the water into wine, but it is the character of both the water and wine that is significant. Jesus takes the ceremonially thin, ritually clean water and transforms it into an overflowing abundance of the best wine available. Our lives in Jesus are the same. He turns us from the ritually clean and thin water to the abundantly rich wine.





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 2:1-11

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 4

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### Opening Question

- What was the most fun wedding you've ever been to?

### In the Word: Read John 2:1-11

- John says in verse 11 that this was Jesus' first sign. Why does John call them signs instead of miracles?
- What do we learn about the relationship of Jesus and his mother from this text?
- Why would running out of wine be such a significant disaster for the host of the wedding?
- What does Jesus mean when he says, "my hour has not yet come?"
- What do you make of the symbolism of turning jars of water for the purification of the Jews into barrels of wine?

### In Our Walk

- In his first sign, Jesus does not work in the open. Rather, he uses the servants of the banquet as the hands by which the water is turned into wine. Though Jesus *performs* the sign, the *honor* of the sign is bestowed upon the host of the feast by the master of the banquet.
  - What is the difference between working for the honor of God rather than for the glory of self?
  - How might this be related to feeling "unappreciated?"

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- This first sign takes place "on the third day" at a wedding feast. Often, John's stories have multiple layers of understanding. What is the symbolic significance of the third day and the wedding?
  - John writes another book called Revelation, which also contains largely symbolic language. Trace the wedding imagery in Revelation 19:7-9; 21:1-9; and 22:17. What relationship is there between these Revelation texts and John 2:1-11?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that our lives will be more defined by the celebration of the wedding than purification rights.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 2:12-25}

## Notes:

### Background

**The Temple** – For Judaism, the temple was the center of cultic life and the dwelling place of God on earth. The first temple constructed by Solomon had been destroyed in 586 BC. It was rebuilt during the reign of Zerubbabel in 515 BC and then was damaged and reconstructed a multitude of times. During the reign of the Judean king Herod the Great (73 BC – 3 AD) the temple was elaborately rebuilt, added on to, and considered one of the greatest temples in the world. “Herod was a man of grand ambitions, and his reconstruction of the Temple of the Jews reflected that aggrandizing character. He essentially doubled the foundation, or Temple Mount, that had existed from Solomon’s day... The entire façade of the Temple was covered with gold plates. When the sun rose the reflection was nearly blinding. On a clear day the brilliance of the Temple was visible from a considerable distance outside Jerusalem. And this brilliance was not due to gold alone; the upper parts of the Temple were pure white, probably marble” (M. O. Wise, “Temple” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 812).

**His Body** – John helps us understand what Jesus is saying about the temple by providing the commentary that this was a reference to the resurrection of Jesus. In the incarnation, Jesus takes upon himself the nature of the temple. In his death, it is destroyed. In his resurrection, it is recreated.

### Non-Believers

**“He knew what was in each person.”** – Are there any secret dimensions of your life that you want nobody to know? Hurts? Fears? Insecurities? Mistakes? Within each of us is an internal desire to not let others completely know us. Where does that part of us come from? Within the claim to Jesus’ divine nature, John says that Jesus “knew all people” and “knew what was in each person.” What would it be like to interact with a person who knew everything there was to know about you? What qualities would you want that person to have? Throughout the next few chapters of John, Jesus interacts with a variety of people and demonstrates his qualities. As you read further ask yourself, “Is this someone I would trust all of my secrets to?”

## Weekly Schedule Week 5

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**See the great introductory video on The Temple @ [www.history.com/topics/holidays/passover/videos/inside-herods-temple](http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/passover/videos/inside-herods-temple)**  
**Also check out the related videos.**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 2:14** - *“Temple Courts”* - Is this the same account as Matthew (21:12-13), Mark (11:15-17), and Luke (19:45-46) who all put the account near the end of Jesus’ ministry. There are two possible explanations. First, there are two different temple cleansing events in Jesus’ ministry. Second, John is not concerned with chronological order and is making a theological, symbolic statement with its location.
- 2:15** - *“something like a whip”* (Gk. *Os*). Some manuscripts have the word “*os*” before whip, which would change it to “something like a whip.”
- 2:16** - *“money changers.”* The Roman money (denarii) had the face of Caesar on it, which wasn’t allowed in the temple. Thus, it had to be exchanged into temple coins.
- 2:23-24** - *“Believed/Entrust”* (Gk. *Episteusan*). There is a word play here that the NIV misses. The same word is used to describe the crowds believing in him and Jesus not believing in men.

## Background

**Passover** –Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. This is the first of three Passovers in the Gospel of John (2:13, 6:4, 12:1). The Passover was a Jewish celebration initiated by God in the law to commemorate God passing over the Jewish families when he killed the first born of the Egyptians as the final plague. Each Israelite door was to be marked by the blood of a lamb. This blood was a sign that the house was to be passed over. Every year this feast was celebrated as one day within the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread as commanded in Exodus 34:18ff.

**Money Changers** – It is hard to precisely nail down what Jesus is upset about within the temple. There are three leading theories. First, Jesus was upset that there were people merchandising and selling the sacrificial animals. Yet, this would have been necessary for fulfilling the sacrificial law. They had to be purchased and sold somewhere. Second, Jesus is standing against the unfair market practices that forced the poor into paying exorbitant amounts to fulfill ritual cleanliness. Yet, there is nothing in the narrative to specifically suggest this. Finally, Jesus is irate at the way the power structure of the temple has been used to keep out the foreigners based in the surrounding context of Psalm 69:9. Once again, this does not appear to be specifically mentioned or implied in the text. It seems most likely “what Jesus therefore conveys by his cleansing of the temple is that God’s holiness and purity cannot tolerate the consistent defilement of “his house,” the temple – judgment is inevitable. In prophetic style, Jesus’ cleansing of the temple provides a symbolic act that points to the inner meaning of Jesus’ crucifixion and bodily resurrection, which render him the replacement of the temple in the life and worship of his people.” Kostenberger, 75.

## Devotional Thoughts John 2:12-25

### Zeal for His House

In our world, Jesus is often depicted as a lovable, non-judgmental savior that just wants to give us a hug. Yet, in this passage Jesus is irate. Mad enough to turn over tables, make a whip, and drive out the money changers in the middle of the most visible and crowded place in Jerusalem. He is that zealous over the holiness of the temple of God. Through his own death and resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit, we are now both communally and individually the temple of the living God. Do we have enough zeal for the holiness of God to be irate over the sinfulness and injustice in our own lives and the life of the church as a whole?

### Psalm 69

The disciples understood and processed this event of Jesus through Psalm 69. Take some time and read through Psalm 69 this week and pray on how it relates to the ministry of Jesus.



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 2:12-25

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 5

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### Opening Question

- What is your biggest pet peeve?

### In the Word: Read John 2:12-25

- Why is the temple important for the Jews?
  - Why do you think Jesus is upset about commerce taking place in the Temple?
- The disciples interpreted Jesus' righteous anger through Psalm 69:9. When you read Psalm 69, what connection do you find between Psalm 69 and this story of Jesus in the temple?
- Do you think Jesus offers an adequate response when the Jews ask about his authority to clean out the temple?
- John says that "after he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said" (2:22). How does the resurrection change the way we understand the stories in the Gospel according to John?

### In Our Walk

- In our world, Jesus is often depicted as a lovable, non-judgmental savior that just wants to give us a hug. Yet, in this passage Jesus is irate. Mad enough to turn over tables, make a whip, and drive out the money changers in the middle of the most visible and crowded place in Jerusalem. He is that zealous over the holiness of the temple of God. Where is the temple of God now?
  - Are we as zealous for the temple of God as Jesus was? Why or why not?
  - Do you think there is any validity to the statement that only Jesus can clean out the temple? Why or why not?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- There are many differences between the temple cleansing in John and in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, and Luke 19:45-46). The most notable difference is that the synoptics all put the account near the end of Jesus' ministry while John has it right at the beginning. There are two possible explanations for this. First, there are two different temple cleansing events in Jesus' ministry. Second, John is not concerned with chronological order and is making a theological, symbolic statement with its location. Do you think the temple cleansing story in John is the same one as the Synoptic Gospels record or are they two different events?
  - If it is the same account that John has moved for theological reasons (like myself and many scholars think) then what relationship does this story, set during the Passover, have with other stories in the immediate context of John?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we will be people who are zealous for the house of God!



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 3:1-21}

## Notes:

### Background

**The Pharisees** – The Pharisees were a distinct political, religious party within Judaism during the late second temple period (ca. 100BC-70AD). They were defined by their stringent obedience to the law and the supplemental teaching on the law handed down through their tradition. The Jewish historian Josephus writes that the Pharisees were the leading sect in Jerusalem, which appears supported from the primary role they play as an antagonist to Jesus’ ministry. Though often viewed negatively through their portrayal in the Gospels, it is important to understand that the Pharisees “stood for alternative visions of the destiny and responsibilities of Israel” (Westerholm, “Pharisees,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 614). They were a people devoted to trying to fulfill their divine calling as God’s chosen people and often disputed what direction that entailed in the present. Nicodemus comes to Jesus with *genuine* hope and questions.

### Theme

**Water** – Water is an important theme in John that has been trickling up throughout the Gospel as seen in the ministry of John the Baptist (1:26, 31, 33) and in the ceremonial jars of the first sign (2:1-9). It is used more in John than in Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined. Water symbolizes birth and life both in its innate physical association with a woman giving birth and in its connection throughout the history of Israel such as the crossing of the Red Sea and Jordan River, the Elijah accounts (1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 2:8-14), and Ezekiel 36:24-32.

### Non-Believers

**Jesus and Religion** – Often people are hesitant to listen to the teachings of Jesus because they innately associate him with religion. Though Jesus was religious, he adamantly teaches that people need more than just religion to know God. Nicodemus was one of the most religious people of his day. He was a leader in the religion of Judaism and considered ritually pure. Yet, Jesus said he had to be completely reborn to be a part of God’s kingdom. How has your view of religion prevented you from listening to what Jesus teaches?

## Weekly Schedule Week 6

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to Tim Keller’s lecture “An Insider and an Outcast”**

**@<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xk8z10MUg-c>**

**Find also the kindle book by the same name on Amazon.**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 3:3, 7** - *“Again/from Above”* (Gk. Anothēn). This word has a double meaning. It can mean either “again” or “from above.” Jesus intends for it to mean “from above” (see 3:31; 19:11, 23), but Nicodemus understands it to mean “again.” This is a literary technique common in John, wherein Jesus’ teaching is misunderstood by someone to allow for further dialogue.
- 3:5** - *“Spirit”* (Gk. Pneumatōs). Once again, this word has a double meaning. It can mean either “spirit” or “wind.” This is an intentional play on words throughout the dialogue.
- 3:5** - *“flesh”* (Gk. Sarks). Unlike in Paul’s letters where flesh has a natural sinful connotation, John uses the term in a more neutral way to describe the nature of created humanity (1:14; 4:23-24).
- 3:16** - *“So”* (Gk. Outos). Once again, there is a double meaning. The word can either mean the degree or the manner. It is much more commonly translated with the manner. Thus, “For this is the way God loves the world.” It is possible, John intends for both uses.
- 3:16-21** - Scholars are unsure if these verses are continued dialogue by Jesus or if they are John’s commentary on the Nicodemus dialogue.

## Background

**“Moses lifted up the snake”** – In numbers 21:1-9 there is a story of the Israelites when they are in the wilderness. They grumble again against God, not trusting in his provision, so the Lord sends snakes into their camp. The snakes inflicted punishment and the people ask Moses to petition the Lord to save those that have been bitten. Moses is told to “lift up” a bronze snake that anyone who looks at it may live. Nicodemus continues to approach Jesus as teacher, but Jesus’ uses this metaphor to tell Nicodemus he is not only teacher but Savior. Until Jesus himself is lifted up like the snake in the desert, the people will continue to die in punishment for their sinfulness. Nicodemus’ role in the Gospel is not yet finished. He is seen again in 7:50-51 and 19:39-42 and offers a paradigm through his continual listening and coming to faith in Jesus.

**Light and Darkness** – “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5-6). These verses in John introduce a dualism between light and darkness that will run throughout the entire Gospel (1:3-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9-10; 12:35-36, 46). It is clear in 3:19-21 that Jesus is light and people chose darkness by denying Jesus. “Everyone who does evil hates the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed, but everyone who lives by the truth comes into the light” Is this statement a rebuke on Nicodemus coming at night or invitation for him to come into light?

## Devotional Thoughts John 3:1-21

### For God So Loved

The phrase “for God so loved the world” is often understood as describing the extent or length of God’s love in the cross of Jesus. Yet, the “so” is better understood as describing the example of God’s love (see Text Notes 3:16). God’s love is demonstrated fully in the cross of Christ. How does this change the way you understand one of the most well-known scriptures? How does the cross illustrate or demonstrate God’s love?

### He Knew All Men

In 2:25, John appears to transition from the temple cleansing to the personal dialogue narratives of chapters 3-4 with the phrase, “for he knew what was in each person.” How does Jesus’ knowledge of who Nicodemus is come through in his dialogue with him? Of all the people Jesus converses with in John, only Nicodemus is told that he must be born again (or from above). Why do you think this is?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 3:1-21

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 6

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### Opening Question

- If you have been baptized, share your baptism story.

### In the Word: Read John 3:1-21

- Why do you think that Nicodemus comes at night to talk to Jesus?
- The phrase “born again” can also be translated “born from above.” What is the difference between the two different translations?
  - Which one do you think Jesus intended?
- Jesus says, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness.” This is a reference to Numbers 21:1-9. How does the story of the snake in the wilderness relate to what Jesus is talking to Nicodemus about?
- In 2:25, John appears to transition from the temple cleansing to the personal dialogue narratives of chapters 3-4 with the phrase, “for he knew what was in each person.” In what ways can you see Jesus’ intimate knowledge of Nicodemus in his dialogue with him?
  - Of all the people Jesus converses with in John, only Nicodemus is told that he must be born again (or from above). Why do you think this is?

### In Our Walk

- Nicodemus was a very religious man who did many religious activities to be pure before God. Yet, Jesus says he has to be completely reborn because his religion won’t bring him into the kingdom of God. Many of us were raised very religious in the same way. Do you think baptism for us could be a religious practice that was devoid of actually being born from above? How would we know?
  - Why do we need to be born again?
  - Do think you have been “born of the Spirit?”

### For The Non-Believer

- Jesus was religious, but, as his dialogue with Nicodemus demonstrates, he taught that more than religion was needed for people to enter the Kingdom of God. What they needed was Jesus. In a culture that is so anti-religious, how can we introduce Jesus to people without religion?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- John 3:16 is one of the most famous scriptures, and also one of the most misunderstood. We often think of the “so” as describing the extent of God’s love, but it is more often understood as describing the characteristic or demonstration of God’s love. How does it change your understanding of this passage when it reads “for God loved the world in this way: that he sent his one and only son...”?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can have authentic dialogues with non-believers like Jesus did.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 3:22-36}

## Notes:

### Background

**Shoshbin** – In ancient Jewish wedding customs the “Shoshbin” served as an honored position similar to our best man. One of the primary roles of the Shoshbin served as a witness, helped financially, and was partially responsible for the success of the wedding. Yet, the Shoshbins primary role was to ensure the joy at the wedding! In 3:29, John the Baptist describes himself as “the friend who attends the bridegroom.” John appears to understand himself as the Shoshbin of Jesus’ wedding. He is not the groom, but is responsible for promoting the joy of the wedding between the groom and his bride. Thus, he “rejoices with joy” (see text note on 3:29) and his “joy is fulfilled!” The author, John, wants to leave no doubt about the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus so as to squash any misconceptions between disciples of Jesus and a few lingering disciples of John the Baptist.

### Theme

**Water and Purification** – Last week, we first acknowledged the important theme of water in the Gospel of John through the dialogue Jesus had with Nicodemus. This theme continues in our current text and through the Samaritan woman dialogue until the second sign takes place in 4:43-54. These stories all serve to interpret the first sign of Jesus turning water into wine in 2:1-11. This is specifically linked by the word “purification” which in John only occurs in 2:6 in reference to the water jars and in 3:25 concerning differing water baptisms.

### Non-Believers

**The One from Above** – For the sake of thoughtfulness, let’s suppose for a brief moment that there is a heaven. Not to be confused with modern misconceptions, the Bible presents heaven simply as the place where God dwells in contrast to earth as the place where humans dwell. If there is a heaven and a person was to come from heaven to earth to tell about the things of heaven, what could convince you that what he was saying was true about heaven? What characteristics of heaven could we as humans on earth comprehend or understand?

## Weekly Schedule Week 7

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to Tim Keller’s lecture “An Insider and an Outcast”**

@<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xk8z10MUg-c>

**Find also the kindle book by the same name on Amazon.**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 3:23** - "Aeon near Salim." The locations of Aeon and Salim are unknown though it is possible they were located in Samaria.
- 3:25** - "Ceremonial Washing" (Gk. *katharismos*). This word simply means purification, but the translators take ceremonial washing based upon the contextual narrative of John and Jesus baptizing. This word in John is only used here and in 2:6.
- 3:29** - "full of joy" (Gk. *Xara xarei*). Literally, "rejoices with joy." A Greek idiom.
- 3:29** - "Completer" (Gk. *Plerow*). Literally, "this joy of mine is fulfilled."
- 3:34** - "gives the Spirit without limit." Literally, "for not by measure does he give the Spirit" (an idiom). Leviticus Rabbah 15:2 states: "The Holy Spirit rested on the prophets by measure." Jesus is contrasted to this. The Spirit rests upon him without measure.' *NET Bible, John 3, 67.*
- 3:36** - "Remains" (Gk. *Menw*) This is the word for dwell that is commonly used in John. Just as God's Spirit dwells on those who listen to Jesus, God's wrath dwells on those who don't.

## Theme

**Life** – It appears that John is using the phrase "life," "eternal life," or "abundant life" in replacement of the phrase Kingdom of God. Whereas, in the synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven is used repeatedly, in John it is only used in the Nicodemus dialogue (3:3, 5). This appears to be intentional. Within that dialogue itself Jesus moves Nicodemus from thinking about Kingdom of God to "eternal life" (3:15-16). Kingdom of God or Heaven was a prominent Jewish theme with certain messianic expectations and, with late authorship, John wants to open the dialogue beyond exclusive Jewish language. Thus, he reiterates in 3:36, "whoever believe in the Son has eternal life."

**"From Above"** – The author, John, uses a play on words with the greek word "anothen," which means either "again" or "from above" in the Nicodemus dialogue. Nicodemus understands it to mean again while Jesus is inferring from above. John appears to help us with our understanding by including "from above" (the same word) in 3:31. This is continued commentary on the Nicodemus dialogue as Jesus is described as the one who is "from above" while Nicodemus can only speak as one from the earth.

**Disciples** – It was common practice in the Greco-Roman world for rivalries to exist between disciples of different teachers. For example, the disciples of Plato and Xenophon were notorious rivals as were the disciples of Seneca and Epicurus. Yet, it was common when writing about those figures posthumously to affiliate the rivalries with the disciples and not with the original teachers. Does John do that here because there is lingering tension? In either case, John the Baptist will not allow such a rivalry to exist with Jesus.

## Devotional Thoughts John 3:22-36

### I Must Become Less

John quickly acknowledges his relationship with Jesus. Jesus is the Messiah and John is not. As he says, "a person can receive only what is given him from heaven" (3:27). He is so confident in his role relationship with Jesus that he testifies, "He must become greater, I must become less." In your life how have you struggled with understanding your role in relationship to Jesus? In what ways does this correlate with our struggle to become less while making Jesus more?

### That Joy is Mine

The disciples of John the Baptist are in obvious disarray because more people are going to Jesus than to John. You would expect John to be upset, but instead he rejoices in joy! He even says his joy is fulfilled despite his relinquishing status. How does our struggle for self-importance diminish our ability to have joy in Christ?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 3:22-36

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 7

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### Opening Question

- Who was the best man or maid of honor at your wedding? If you're not married, who would be? Why was that person chosen?

### In the Word: Read John 3:22-36

- Why do you think the disciples of John had such an issue with Jesus baptizing people?
- In what ways does John's reply to his disciples reveal the character of both John and Jesus?
- We continue to see the theme of water in this passage. What is the significance of water in this passage?
  - How does it relate to the use of water in what we've studied so far in John?
- How does this passage serve as commentary or explanation of the Nicodemus dialogue that opens the chapter?
  - What related themes do you see expanded upon in this passage and the Nicodemus dialogue?

### In Our Walk

- John quickly acknowledges his relationship with Jesus. Jesus is the Messiah and John is not. As he says, "a person can receive only what is given him from heaven" (3:27). He is so confident in his relationship with Jesus that he testifies, "He must become greater, I must become less."
  - In your life, how have you struggled with understanding your role in relationship to Jesus?
  - How do we struggle to make Jesus more, while becoming less, in everyday life?
  - Why is strengthening your relationship with Jesus so helpful in acknowledging the need for him to become more and you less?

### For Non-Believers ?

- John serves as the best-man, Christ as the groom, and the church (us) as the bride. In what ways is our role similar and different to that of John the Baptist?
  - How do these distinctions in role help us share the good news of Jesus?
  - How can we do a better job of sharing the joy upon joy that Jesus has brought to our lives?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that Christ may become more and we may become less.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 4:1-26}

## Notes:

### Background

**Samaritans** – The Samaritans were a specific religious group geographically located between Judea and Galilee. They worshipped on Mount Gerizim and followed only the Torah (Law of Moses) while rejecting the Wisdom literature (Psalms, Job, etc.) and Prophets. It is hard to trace their heritage, but they were a distinct people with rigorous morality. The Jews considered them unclean and despised them with a deep animosity. It was standard Rabbinic teaching for Jews not to interact with Samaritans. Late teaching went as far as to say “the daughters of the Samaritans are menstruants from their cradle” (B. Nid. 31b). Thus, a Samaritan woman was ceremonially unclean and any interaction with her would cause similar uncleanness.

### Theme

**Living Water** – Within this text, water is the central metaphor in the discussion between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. At the well, Jesus asks for water (a request that is never fulfilled). After the woman’s response, Jesus offers her “living water.” The phrase “living water” is intended to carry two meanings. On the basic level, “living water” was flowing or running water which was required for Jewish purification. The Samaritan woman understands him to be speaking of this kind of water based upon her reply. Yet, Jesus is using the term “living” not to describe the physical characteristic of the water but to describe the eternal, spiritual quality of the water he offers. The ritual purity of Nicodemus and the unquenchable thirst of the Samaritan woman are only satisfied in the living water of Jesus.

### Non-Believers

**Worship** – Within this dialogue there is the debate between who worships correctly: Samaritans or Jews (see Samaritans above). Through the centuries Christians have taken part in the monstrosity of hate filled wars over worship. In his dialogue with the Samaritan woman, Jesus proposes a new approach to worship that is geographically transcendent. Worship for Jesus is based in the eternal principles of Spirit and Truth. Would Jesus have condoned wars over worship?

## Weekly Schedule Week 8

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through provided notes.**

### Sunday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to Tim Keller’s lecture “An Insider and an Outcast”**  
**@<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xk8z10MUg-c>**  
**Find also the kindle book by the same name on Amazon.**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 4:6** - “about noon.” Literally, the sixth hour. Some argue a reference to 6am. Though this would make sense in this text, it doesn’t explain 19:14 with this same reference.
- 4:14** - “never thirst” (Gk. Dipsesei eis ton aiwna). Literally, “will never be thirsty into the ages (or for eternity).” This language connects the quench of thirst both in the present and in the age to come.
- 4:23** - “a time” (Gk. ‘wra). Literally, an hour. Jesus continues the hour theme that was first brought forward in the water to wine miracle.
- 4:23** - “they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” “The Father wants such people as his worshipers. Note how the woman has been concerned about *where* people ought to worship, while Jesus is concerned about *who* people ought to worship.” *NET Bible*, John 4:23.
- 4:26** - “I, the one speaking to you – I am he” (Gk. Egw eimi). Literally, “I am, the one you are speaking to.” This is an often overlooked “I am” statement in John.

## Commentary

**Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman** – John intentionally juxtaposes Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman in the personal dialogues with Jesus.

Nicodemus	Samaritan Woman
“a man of the Pharisees” (3:1)	“a woman of Samaria” (4:7)
Social Insider: “Jewish Ruling Council,” an elected position (3:1)	Social Outcast: Arrives alone in the midday heat to fetch water (4:6-7)
Jew	Samaritan
Initiates dialogue with Jesus (3:2)	Jesus initiates dialogue (4:7)
Comes at night (3:2)	Comes at Noon (4:6)
Struggles with Power (3:2)	Struggles with Intimacy (4:16-18)
Misunderstands “born again/from above” (3:3-15)	Misunderstands “living water” (4:10-15)

**Jacob’s Well** – This dialogue with the Samaritan woman is intentionally written in a way to invoke the well scenes famous in Genesis 24, 29 and Exodus 2. This will be given significant attention in next week’s notes.

**Spirit and Truth** – Though slightly disguised, this appears to be a Trinitarian remark by Jesus. With the rare exception, Spirit in the Gospel of John refers to the Holy Spirit, which is given considerable attention in John 14-16 and is breathed upon the believers in John 20:21-22. In John, Truth is used as descriptive of Jesus. John the Baptist testifies to the “truth” in his testimony about Jesus (7:18). Likewise, Jesus is “full of grace and truth” (1:14, 17) and he is self-described as “the truth” (14:6). Thus, when Jesus says worship must occur in Spirit and Truth, he probably means in the Holy Spirit and in Himself.

## Devotional Thoughts John 4:1-26

### Five Husbands

Jesus dramatically shifts the conversation by asking the woman to call her husband. She responds, probably sensually, “I have no husband.” Jesus cuts through the smoke screen and into her heart by telling her everything she ever did. In her deepest intimacy, she has sought life through a man. Yet, Jesus provokes the reality that she can only find identity in himself, the Messiah. When have you tried to find identity in human relationships instead of in Christ? How have these relationships left you thirsty?

### Identity Markers

Within this narrative, Jesus deconstructs every identity marker of the Samaritan woman (gender, sexual orientation, family, race, political, moral, and religious) and reconstructs her identity through the new identity markers of the Spirit and the Messiah. How has your relationship with Christ reconstructed your identity markers?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 4:1-26

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 8

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### Opening Question

- When is a time in your life you have had your heart broken?

### In the Word: Read John 4:1-26

- What cultural barriers does Jesus break through by talking with the Samaritan woman?
- What misunderstandings are there between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in this dialogue?<sup>1</sup>
  - How are these misunderstandings used by Jesus?
- Water is one of the central motifs in this dialogue. How has water been used throughout the Gospel According to John so far? *If needed see John 1:24-34; 2:1-10; 3:1-8; 3:22-26.*
- John sets up an intentional contrast between Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman. What differences do you see in these two dialogues?
  - What is John trying to teach us through these differences?

### In Our Walk

- It is fairly obvious when you pay close attention that as soon as Jesus asks the woman for a drink she begins to flirt with him. This isn't a surprise based upon her having had five husbands and living with a man that isn't her husband despite that this was universally regarded as immoral in the Ancient world. Jesus cuts through the smoke screen and into her heart by telling her everything she ever did. In her deepest intimacy, she has sought life through a man. Yet, Jesus provokes the reality that she can only find identity in himself, the Messiah.
  - When have you tried to find identity in human relationships instead of in Christ?
  - How have these relationships left you thirsty?
  - How is Nicodemus like the Samaritan woman in this way?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- Identity markers are used in sociology, psychology, anthropology, and many other fields of study. They are the characteristics that define an individual's identity both internally and externally such as race, gender, language, etc. Within this narrative, Jesus deconstructs every identity marker of the Samaritan woman (gender, sexual orientation, family, race, political, moral, and religious) and reconstructs her identity through the new identity markers. What are these new identity markers?
  - How do we find our identity in these new identity markers?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we will find identity through the Holy Spirit and in the Truth that is Jesus the Messiah.

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<sup>1</sup> Question taken from N.T. Wright, *John: Studies for Individuals and Groups*, 31.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 4:27-42}

## Notes:

### Background

**Well Scenes** – Within the Pentateuch (first five books of the OT) there are many *type-scenes*. Type-scenes are the reiteration of similar events with different people used to compare and contrast the quality of the person. Of the most famous type-scenes are the well-betrothal type-scenes. In Genesis 24; 29 and Exodus 2, there are three paradigmatic well type-scenes wherein the senior servant of Abraham (Gen. 24), Jacob (Gen. 29), and Moses (Ex. 2) all travel to a foreign land, arrive at a well thirsty from the day's travel. Each of them are on a mission for a bride. Each finds the bride either through action or dialogue at the well. The bride returns to her village and brings back a larger group of people. The main character then leaves with his new hosts who offer a meal and housing. John adopts this type-scene in his portrayal of the historical interaction with Jesus and the Samaritan woman to teach a vital point: Christ's mission is to find his bride. Remember, the first sign occurs at a wedding and John the Baptist subtly in John 3:28-29 speaks of Christ as the groom. Jesus doesn't find his bride at the temple or in Nicodemus, the righteous Pharisee. In chapter 4, John launches into the well-betrothal type-scene his audience would have known well to demonstrate that he has found his bride in any person, regardless of race, religion, etc. who "became believers" (4:41). The linkage of mission is even more adamant within the Genesis 24 comparison as the servant of Abraham and Jesus both refuse to eat until their mission is accomplished (Gen. 24:33; John 4:31-38).

### Non-Believers

**"He told me everything I ever did."** – Too often when Christians pitch Christianity we talk about the church, sin, religious practices or morality. Yet, when the Samaritan woman goes back to town she pitches none of these things. Instead, she talks about who Jesus is. The center of the Christian faith is the person of Jesus. The other things are peripheral. Is your struggle with Christianity over Jesus or is it over these peripheral things?

## Weekly Schedule Week 9

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch this Modern Interpretation of the Woman at the Well:**

@<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5y2GImTxpkM>

**Bring some Kleenex when you do.**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**4:27** - "What do you want?" (Gk. Zetew). Literally, "what do you seek?" This is intended to tie together 4:23 and 1:38. Specifically, in 1:38 it is Jesus who asks the disciples what they seek and in this text the disciples will not ask Jesus what he seeks.

**4:28** - "Messiah." Here we have the term "Christ" in the Gk., which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic term "Messiah." Thus, it appears when the woman uses Messiah in 4:25 it is a cue that she was speaking in Aramaic or, possibly but not likely, Hebrew.

**4:39** - "He told me everything I ever did." This statement by the woman is a literary allusion back to 2:24 in which John says Jesus didn't need a testimony about a person, because he knew what was in them. These two phrases serve as bookends, marking the beginning and ending of the personal dialogue section.

**4:26** - "Savior of the world." "There is an irony in the Samaritans declaration that Jesus was really *the Savior of the world*, an irony foreshadowed in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel (1:11): "He came to his own, and his own did not receive him." Yet, the Samaritans welcomed Jesus and proclaimed him to be not the Jewish Messiah only, but the *Savior of the world*." (NET Bible, John 4:41, 92).

## Theme

**Water** – Once again, water continues as a prominent theme in this narrative. "John reports that the woman abandoned her waterpot (4:28) signifying that she was more concerned with the water of eternal life than the natural water she had originally come to seek (4:7, 11, 15). Because John employs the same term in 2:6-7, we may infer a continuation of the replacement motif highlighted there and frequently in John's water motif. Just as Jesus' gift is greater than the waters of ritual purity, it is greater than the gift of Jacob's well." (Bauckham, *John*, 623.)

**The Harvest** – There is a brief window in which Jesus can teach his disciples as they return and the woman leaves. The disciples are concerned primarily with the surface level of the situation as Jesus speaks with the Samaritan woman (4:27) and they offer him food (4:31), but Jesus wants them to recognize a deeper spiritual reality. Jesus' mission is more than physical. It is of "Spirit and Truth." Though they see the barrenness of the Samaritan countryside, Jesus sees fields "ripe for harvest" (4:35). He wants his disciples to understand that their mission is to reap the harvest which Jesus will sow through his death and resurrection. This is accentuated in the narrative by the contrast between the disciples and the Samaritan woman. When the disciples go to town they return with bread, but when the woman goes to town she returns with people.

## Devotional Thoughts John 4:27-42

### Physical vs. Spiritual

Within this narrative there is a strong contrast between the disciples concern over social rumors (4:27) and physical needs (4:31) and Jesus' concern over true dialogue and spiritual needs. This is still a real struggle with disciples of Jesus today. In your life, how have you been too concerned with social rumors and physical needs? What would it look like in your life to be primarily concerned with authentic dialogue and spiritual needs?

### The Harvest is Ripe

Jesus tells his disciples that the fields are ready for them to harvest, not because of their own work but because of the work of Jesus himself. This is prophetic for us today. Through Jesus' work in his death and resurrection, we are able to reap the harvest. Do you believe the fields are ready? What does it mean that Christ has done the work in evangelism and you are called only to harvest?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 4:27-42

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 9

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### Opening Question

- Have you ever been on a mission?

### In the Word: Read John 4:27-42

- How would you describe the relationship between the disciples and Jesus at this point in John?
  - Why do think none of the disciples asked Jesus why he was talking to the woman?
  - Should they have asked him about the woman?
- How does Jesus' interaction with the disciples compare or contrast with his interaction with the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus?
- In this text, how do the Samaritans move from unbelief to belief?
  - What is that progression like?
  - What role does the Samaritan woman have in their coming to belief?

### In Our Walk

- What  is the significance that the woman “left her water jar?”
  - Based upon the woman leaving her water jar, how has what is significant to you changed since you came to know Jesus?
  - What “water jars” have you held on to?
- This passage is about Jesus teaching his disciples that the fields are ready for the harvest. What are some reasons that we miss seeing and reaping the harvest?
  - How has Jesus done the work to provide the harvest? Does this work continue today?
  - What are some differences between the way we try and bring people to believe and the way the Samaritan woman did?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- Undoubtedly, the literary context for this passage is the betrothal type scenes in Genesis 24, 29, and Exodus 2. These scenes follow a standard pattern: The main figure, the senior servant of Abraham (Gen. 24), Jacob (Gen. 29), and Moses (Ex. 2), all travel to a foreign land and arrive at a well thirsty from the day's travel. Each of them are on a mission for a bride. Each finds the bride either through action or dialogue at the well. The bride returns to her village and brings back a larger group of people. The main character then leaves with his new hosts who offer a meal and housing. How does the John 4 interaction with the Samaritan woman follow this pattern?
  - What is John trying to teach using this literary technique to describe the historical account of the Samaritan woman?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we will see and reap the harvest.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 4:43-54}

## Notes:

### Background

**Prophet Without Honor** - In all four accounts of the Gospel there is a reference to a prophet not having honor in his own town (Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24). This phrase in the Greek means more than simply his hometown (see text notes 4:44). It is a reference to his “fatherland” or his own people. The concept of rejection in a hometown was common in both Greco-Roman philosophical circles and, more importantly, in Jewish prophetic studies. It was a prevailing theme among second temple Judaism that the Jews had killed and rejected their own prophets sent to warn them of their own destruction (Jer. 26:11, 23; Neh. 9:26). Although it initially appears as a side note in John 4:44, it is an important connecting phrase for what John is trying to do in this section. He has already made it clear that Jesus’ “own did not receive him” (1:11). It appears that John is trying to establish a theological rather than geographical concept that as a prophet Jesus was rejected among his own people, but he was accepted by the Samaritans, Galileans, and, in the following narrative, members of the Roman establishment.

### Theme

**Believe** - In the Gospel of John, belief is not only a premier theme, it is an active theme. The author never uses the noun *pistis* (faith), but uses the verb *pisteuo* (believe) 98 times in the Gospel. There is a dynamic tension throughout the Gospel between Jesus revealing his glory (through the signs or teaching) causing people to believe in him and believing in him leading to be able to behold his glory. Continue to watch as the themes of belief and glory interact.

### Non-Believers

**“Unless you see”** – Within this dialogue Jesus is openly upset that the only way people will believe in him is if they see the signs (miracles) that he is performing. I often have people tell me that if they could just see a miracle or a sign they would believe, but Jesus is always hesitant to trust faith based in a miracle. Why do you think this is? Would you believe if you saw a sign?

## Weekly Schedule Week 10

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch or listen to John Piper’s wonderful sermon on this text:**

<http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/go-your-son-will-live>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**4:44** – “his own country” (gk. *te idia patriidi*). This phrase carries with it not only a geographical connotation but a familial heritage concept as well. The root of “hometown” being “patri” such as patriarch and means “father.” It could be translated “his own fatherland.”

**4:46** - “All the things Jesus had done.” Probably refers to the signs reported in 2:23.

**4:49** - “Come down.” Capernaum was significantly lower in elevation than Cana. The fifteen-mile walk would have probably taken two days based upon the late time of the initial event (1PM, 4:52), and explains why the servants met him the next day (4:50-52).

**4:52** - “the time” (gk. *ten wran*). Literally, “the hour.” See notes on 2:1-11.

**4:54** - “That Jesus performed.” “This sentence in Greek involves an object-complement construction. The force can be either “Jesus did this as,” or possibly “Jesus made this to be.” The latter translation accents not only Jesus’ power but his sovereignty too. Cf. 2:11 where the same construction occurs” (*NET Bible*, 4:54, 114).

## Theme

**Believe and Live** – Throughout the Gospel, John makes it clear that there is an intimate connection between believing in Jesus and having life. In this text, this concept embraces and transcends the merely physical. Life comes to the sick boy through the belief of the father. Yet, it is in the physical restoration of life that the whole household then comes to a deeper belief in the person of Jesus. In a patriarchal society, it was common for the whole household to follow the religious conviction of the leading father.

## Background

**Certain Royal Official** – It is commonly understood that this person was a leading figure, likely a soldier, under Herod Antipas the Roman Tetrarch. Capernaum was a border town, and, likely, had many officials. Soldiers and members of the Herodian dynasty were not well-liked by Jews especially in rural Galilee. Despite this, Jesus once again responds to the need of the situation in hopes of promoting belief.

**Cana of Galilee** – Cana serves as a type of geographical bookends to the major dialogue section in between the first and second signs. The comparisons between the initial sign in Cana at the wedding and the second sign of the healing of the boy in Cana are abundant. In both, Jesus is provoked to activity despite his hesitancy (2:3-5; 4:48-50), he rises to the occasion without physically performing the miracle (2:7-10; 4:50-53), and people come to belief (2:11; 4:53).

## Devotional Thoughts John 4:43-54

### Do you believe?

There is an interesting twist between Samaria and Galilee. In Samaria, the people believed based upon what they have heard, in Galilee Jesus is frustrated because the people will only believe based upon what they see. Why does the difference between hearing and seeing matter to Jesus?

### At his word...

Initially, Jesus is hesitant to heal the official’s son because he is trying to provoke a deeper faith in him. Yet, because of the official’s persistence, Jesus gives in, kind of. He does actually refuse the official’s request to go down to Capernaum, but he doesn’t refuse to heal the boy. Rather, he tests the faith of the official. Will he trust Jesus’ word or does he have to see for himself? The text says clearly, “the man took Jesus at his word and departed” (4:50). Would you have gone? Why do we struggle to trust the word of Jesus when we aren’t able to see him?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 4:43-54

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 10

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### Opening Question

- When is a time that you saw something you could not believe?

### In the Word: Read John 4:43-54

- Why do you think Jesus is upset that people only believe based upon signs and wonders?
- What do we know about the man who comes to Jesus?
  - How does our knowledge of him change the way we think about the story?
  - How does the royal official differ or relate to Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman?
- In this text, how does the royal official move from unbelief to belief?
  - How does this compare or contrast with the way the Samaritans moved from unbelief to belief in 4:39-42?

### In Our Walk

- The text tells us that Jesus knew he was not honored in his home country or land. Yet, the people in Galilee, his home country, welcomed him. Is it possible to welcome someone without honoring them?
  - How is it that his own people welcome him without honoring him?
  - In what ways in our life might we welcome Jesus without honoring him?
- Initially, Jesus is hesitant to heal the official's son because he is trying to provoke a deeper faith in him. Yet, because of the official's persistence, Jesus gives in, kind of. He does actually refuse the official's request to go down to Capernaum, but he doesn't refuse to heal the boy. Rather, he tests the faith of the official. Will he trust Jesus' word or does he have to see for himself? The text says clearly, "The man took Jesus at his word and departed" (4:50). If it was your child sick, would you have gone without Jesus?
  - Why do we struggle to trust the word of Jesus when we aren't able to see him?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- Throughout the Gospel of John, it appears Jesus has been contrasting two types of faith. There is the faith based upon seeing (such as the miracles and signs) and the faith based upon hearing. Take some time to read 1:14-18, 34-39, 50-51; 3:8-11, 29-32; 4:1, 39-42, 43-48. In the passages you just read, what are the differences between these kinds of faith?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we will have the kind of belief that Jesus asks of us.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 5:1-15}

## Notes:

### Background

**Pools at Bethesda** – John is specific about the location of this miracle, and other ancient manuscripts confirm the existence of the pools. The Qumran communities *Copper Scroll*, which dates pre-70 AD, says “By Bethesdatayin, in the pool where you enter is a smaller basin” (Perkins, *John*, 959).

Archeologists believe that the pools John is describing are those currently referred to as the Twin Pools beneath St. Anne’s Monastery. Nearly twenty feet deep, as long as a football field, and filled by rain water, the pool served as a public place where many beggars and the lame often laid. On all four sides of the pools were porticos and there was another portico that separated the two pools. Thus, John writes about the “five covered colonnades” (5:2). Although the explanatory comments of 5:3b-4 might not be authentic (see text note), there are other archeological reasons to believe ancient Greeks, Romans, and Jews viewed the pools as having healing powers. For example, a marble foot as a votive gift has been found beside the pool with an inscription describing its purpose (Finegan, *Archeology*, 147).

### Theme

**Water** – Once again, water is a central motif in this narrative. This time, it is neither the ceremonial water jars (2:6), the ritual waters of John’s baptism (3:25) or Jacob’s well (4:6). Instead, it is mystical waters of the pools of Bethesda, which “the blind, the lame, the paralyzed” gather around for healing. Jesus teaches that no water can provide healing just as no water can continue the wedding feast, provide ceremonial cleanliness, or quench spiritual thirst. It is only Jesus who can truly fulfill these roles.

### Non-Believers

**It’s in the details** - This very brief story contains a multitude of specific details such as “near the Sheep Gate,” “called Bethesda,” “five covered colonnades,” “here a great number of disabled people used to lie,” and “had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.” Why do you think John includes so many specific details concerning this healing? What does this teach us about the historicity of this text?

## Weekly Schedule Week 11

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch the wonderful, short archeological video on the pool of Bethesda:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5Bj1V8irUU>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**5:2** - "In Aramaic" (gk. en Ebraisti). Literally, "in Hebrew."

**5:3b-4** - "and they waited for the moving of the waters. 4. From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had." The earliest and best texts do not include any of this in any form. Thus, most current textual scholars do not regard any portion of this as authentic. Most likely, it was added as commentary to explain context as readers moved further away from the original audience. Copyists included it in copying as part of the original text creating a heritage of accidental inclusion. Regardless, it is hardly a significant textual variant.

**5:10, 15** - "Jewish leaders" (Gk. Ioudaioi) Literally, "the Jews." Based upon context, this term is used to describe the Jews as a whole people, residents of Jerusalem, or the authorities in Jerusalem. The last seems best in this context.

## Background

**Sabbath Regulations** - "The issue here is not only the Sabbath but the law as a whole. Jewish teachers often regarded dismissing one commandment as tantamount to dismissing the whole of the Torah; this principle would have been still more true (qal vaomer) for a "heavy" biblical commandment like that of the Sabbath" (Bauckham, *John*, 641).

**Linkage with 9:1-41** - Undoubtedly, John wants us to hold this narrative in our minds as we move on to read the story of the healing of the man born blind in 9:1-14. We will draw more theological purposes for this connection when we reach that text, but for now the similarities are notable:

Lame Man (5:1-17)	Blind Man (9:1-41)
Background and History (5:5)	Background and History (9:1)
Jesus initiates conversation (5:6)	Jesus initiates conversation (9:6)
Pool's healing power (5:7)	Pool of Siloam, healing powers (9:7)
Jesus heals on Sabbath (5:9)	Jesus heals on Sabbath (9:14)
Jewish accusations (5:10)	Pharisaical accusations (9:16)
Jews asked who healed him (5:13)	Pharisees ask who healed him (9:15)
Doesn't know who/where Jesus is (5:13)	Doesn't know where/who Jesus is (9:12)
Jesus finds him (5:14)	Jesus finds him (9:35)
Relationship of Sin and Suffering (5:14)	Rejects relationship between sin and suffering (9:3)
Jesus works as Father works (5:17)	Jesus does the work of the one who sent him (9:4)

## Devotional Thoughts John 5:1-15

### Do you want to get well?

The initial question Jesus asks the lame man seems rude and thoughtless. Yet, in many ways it cuts to the heart of the human predicament. Too many people would much rather wallow in their pain, chaos, and sin than actually get well. Just as the lame man has an apt excuse, "I have no one to help me," so we too often also have some seemingly valid excuse. Yet, the question of Jesus doesn't change. Do you really want to get well? What excuses in your life are keeping you from the spiritual healing of Jesus?

### Sabbath Keeping

I think that John intends for us to laugh or at least chuckle to ourselves when the Jewish leaders reprimand the man for carrying his mat on the Sabbath. After 38 years of not being able to walk, all the leaders care about is that he is breaking the Sabbath law! Too often we are like these Jewish leaders stuck in the insignificant details and rules while unable to celebrate the work of God right in front of us! When is a time in your life you have been so concerned with the details that you have missed out on the celebration? Why do we struggle so much with truly relishing the work of God in other people's lives?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 5:1-15

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 11

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### Opening Question

- You're stuck on the side of the road and you have enough battery for one phone call. Who do you call?

### In the Word: Read John 5:1-15

- Why does John accentuate the "at once" in verse 9?
- Once again, we see the theme of water in this passage, but here it is in a different role. What role does water play in this passage?
  - How does water in this passage relate to how the theme has been used in John up to this point?
- In what ways has the Sabbath been broken in this passage?

### In Our Walk

- The initial question Jesus asks the lame man seems rude and thoughtless. Yet, in many ways it cuts to the heart of the human predicament. Too many people would much rather wallow in their pain, chaos, and sin than get well. Just as the lame man has an apt excuse, "I have no one to help me," so we too often also have some seemingly valid excuse. Yet, the question of Jesus doesn't change.
  - Do you really want to get well?
  - Why do people sometimes prefer to wallow in pain, chaos, and sin?
  - What excuses in your life are keeping you from the spiritual healing of Jesus?
- I think that John intends for us to laugh or at least chuckle to ourselves when the Jewish leaders reprimand the man for carrying his mat on the Sabbath. After 38 years of not being able to walk, all the leaders care about is that he is breaking the Sabbath law! Too often we are like these Jewish leaders stuck in the insignificant details and rules while unable to celebrate the work of God right in front of us!
  - When is a time in your life you have been so concerned with the details that you have missed out on the celebration?
  - Why do we struggle so much with truly relishing the work of God in other people's lives?

### For Non-Believers ?

- What specific details do you see in this text?
  - Why do you think John includes all these specific details?
  - What do these details teach us about the historicity of the text?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can have hearts willing to get well!



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 5:16-47}

## Notes:

### Background

**Sabbath and Blasphemy** – At the heart of the controversy between Jesus and the Jews or Jewish leaders is Jesus’ understanding of the law. In this passage, it is specifically Jesus’ interpretation of the Sabbath. The Jewish leaders have two issues with Jesus: He is breaking the law by healing on the Sabbath (5:16) and he is blaspheming by referring to God as his Father in a unique way showing equality (5:17-18). How will Jesus address these issues? He does this through a progression. First, he testifies to his own relationship with the Father regardless of what the Jewish leaders think of this relationship (19-23). He then affirms that out of his relationship with the Father comes his “work” (note the Sabbath connection) as judge and life giver in line with that of the Father (24-30). In standard Jewish teaching two testimonies were needed. Thus, he then moves on to the testimony of the signs he has performed (31-36). Finally, he argues that God himself has testified, but because they are mute and blind to God’s Word (both in Scripture and in the person of Jesus) they cannot believe in Jesus (37-47). Kostenberger writes, “This is the tragedy John detects in those who opposed Jesus during his earthly ministry: in their concern for obedience to the Law, they missed the coming of the Lawgiver; in their concern for upholding the requirements for a religious life, they missed the one who is Life itself; in their concern for the study of the Scriptures, they missed the coming of the one of whom the Scriptures spoke (5:39-40, 45-47). The Jews’ discipleship of Moses kept them from following their Messiah” (*John*, 98).

### Non-Believers

**Judging** – One of the most common scriptures quoted in today’s world is Matthew 7:1, “Do not judge.” This is commonly used to say that Jesus was non-judgmental. Yet, in this week’s passage Jesus says clearly that one of his main tasks from God is to judge not only in the present but at the time of the resurrection to come. Do you think there are any people in this world that don’t deserve eternal life? Why? Who should be the one that determines who receives eternal life?

## Weekly Schedule Week 12

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch The Bible Projects short on the Animated Explanation of the Law:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BG09Mmd\\_cU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BG09Mmd_cU)

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**5:18-19** - "Making, do, do, doing, does, does" (gk. poieo). "the discourse play on the semantic range of [poieo] in a manner difficult to render in English... Jesus does not "make" [poiewn] himself anything, but rather "does" [poiei] what he sees the father "do." He does not make himself God, but by the Father's decree is the Father's co-creator of both the first and future creation, 1:3, 5:21-22" (Keener, 648).

**5:19-30** - "He can do only what he sees his Father doing." Jesus appears to be adopting apprenticeship language in this narrative. Most sons took up the trade of their fathers and learned it through imitation.

**5:21** - "Raises" (Gk. Egeire). Translated "raise." This word is the same word that Jesus uses in 5:8 when he tells the paralyzed man to "get up!"

**5:35** - "John was a lamp that burned and gave light." Sirach, a well-known Jewish apocalyptic text referred to Elijah as a "flame like a torch" (48:1). Jesus appears to use this same analogy with John the Baptist.

## Theme

**Life** - John's account of the Gospel begins with the assertion very early that in Jesus "was life, and the life was the light of all mankind" (1:4). In the notes on John 3:22-26, we asserted that John replaces the phrase "kingdom of God" that is so prevalent in the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke) with the phrase "eternal life" in order to open the dialogue beyond Jewish preconceptions. After introducing this theme in the prologue (1:4) and defining it in the Nicodemus dialogue (3:16-17, 36), John continues to develop it through the conversation with the Samaritan woman (4:14) and the ensuing conversation with his disciples (4:36). It is no surprise that the theme returns as Jesus defends his Sabbath activity. Sabbath is based in the creation narrative. God works in giving life in the first six days and then Sabbaths on the seventh. As the Jewish leaders are furious with Jesus breaking the law, he reminds them that eternal life only comes from the work of God, the same work that Jesus is doing (5:19-30).

**Resurrection** - The resurrection of the dead was a hot topic in the denominational debates of Judaism. The standard pharisaical interpretation was that there would be a future day in which both resurrection and judgment would go hand in hand. This is confirmed by the daily prayer of Judaism (*Shemoneh Esreh*, 5<sup>th</sup> cent. BC), which prays "You, O Lord, are mighty forever, You are the reviver of the dead... you revive the dead with great compassion... you are faithful to revive the dead. Blessed are You, O Lord, who revives the dead" (Blessing Two). Jesus' claim is that he is the fulfillment of this prayer as the judge who grants eternal life. This has been demonstrated in him telling the paralytic to "Get Up!" (see text note: 5:21).

## Devotional Thoughts John 5:16-47

### "What I say?"

Jesus ends his first extensive dialogue with the Jewish leaders with the rhetorical question, "How are you going to believe what I say?" He has reprimanded them for not believing his own testimony, the testimony of John, the testimony of the signs, the testimony of God himself, and the testimony of Scripture. It is not that they do not desire to glorify God, but that they desire more to glorify one another than to glorify God (5:41-44). Their own legalistic self-honoring and self-gratification keeps them from actually loving God. They miss life giving relationship with the Son of Man, the Word made flesh, because of their diligence to scripture. When has patting yourself on the back gotten in the way of receiving honor from God? When has trying to legalistically honor God through diligence to scripture kept you from actually loving God? In what ways have you missed the testimony of Jesus?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 5:16-47

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 12

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### Opening Question

- Describe a time in your life when you worked as an apprentice or trained under someone.

### In the Word: Read John 5:16-47

- What are the two main issues that the Jewish leaders have with Jesus?
  - How does Jesus defend himself from these claims?
  - Who or what does Jesus refer to as testimonies that his claims are true?
- Where do you hear apprenticeship language in 19-30?
- According to Jesus, why don't the Jewish leaders believe the testimonies?

### In Our Walk

- Jesus ends his first extensive dialogue with the Jewish leaders with the rhetorical question, "How are you going to believe what I say?" He has reprimanded them for not believing his own testimony, the testimony of John, the testimony of the signs, the testimony of God himself, and the testimony of Scripture. It is not that they do not desire to glorify God, but that they desire to glorify one another more than to glorify God (5:41-44). Their legalistic self-honoring and self-gratification keeps them from loving God. They miss life giving relationship with the Son of Man, the Word made flesh, because of their diligence to scripture.
  - In your life, when has self-gratification gotten in the way of seeking honor from God?
  - When has trying to legalistically honor God through diligence to scripture kept you from loving God?
  - What preconceptions, traditions, or insecurities keep you from believing the testimony of Jesus?

### For the Non-Believer

- One of the most common scriptures quoted in today's world is Matthew 7:1, "Do not judge." This is commonly used to say that Jesus was non-judgmental. Yet, in this week's passage Jesus says clearly that one of his main tasks from God is to judge not only in the present but at the time of the resurrection to come.
  - How do we teach that Jesus is the ultimate judge to non-believers without fear-mongering?
    - How does Jesus' love and justice go hand in hand?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that God will take away anything that detracts or distracts us from authentic relationship with the Son.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 6:1-24}

## Notes:

### Background

**Geography and Chronology** - John sets the geographical and chronological setting of the miraculous feeding. He includes specific details of an eyewitness but with the style of a story teller. Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee or Tiberias (6:1). The name of the lake changed between the time of Jesus' ministry and John's writing. Jesus' climbs up onto the mountainside in what is now referred to as Golan Heights (6:1). Jesus sees the crowds coming up the mountainside to him from the lake (6:5). It is nearly the Passover, indicating spring time around the sea of Galilee (6:4). The grass is green and abundant (6:10). Wildflowers and budding trees cover the mountainside. The hot spring sun bakes the cool air from the lake, which later in the evening will stir a thunderstorm (6:18). Thus, the table is set for abundant provision and as the bread and fish are multiplied the crowd recalls the messianic hope of Isaiah 25:6-8,

*"On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare  
a feast of rich food for all peoples,*

*a banquet of aged wine—*

*the best of meats and the finest of wines.*

<sup>7</sup>*On this mountain he will destroy  
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,  
the sheet that covers all nations;*

<sup>8</sup> *he will swallow up death forever."*

### Non-Believers

**Terrified** - John recalls the story of Jesus walking on water across the lake to his disciples who are on a boat in the middle of the storm. I think their reaction is genuinely remembered, "they were terrified." It is interesting how many times in the Bible that someone's first expression in reaction to Jesus is fear. This is an often overlooked aspect of coming to know Jesus. When you think back to the stories we have read about Jesus, what would make you afraid of him?

## Weekly Schedule Week 13

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch the humorous portrayal of the feeding of the Five Thousand by Ted and Company**

<https://vimeo.com/1288928>

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# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 6:5** - "When Jesus looked up." Literally, "when he lifted up his eyes." This idiom linguistically links this text with 4:35 when Jesus teaches his disciples to "lift up their eyes" for the harvest is now.
- 6:5** - "Asked Philip." F. F. Bruce suggests, "Since Philip came from neighboring town of Bethsaida (cf. John 1:44), it was natural that he should be consulted about places where food might be bought" (Bruce, 143).
- 6:7** - "*More than a half years' wages.*" Literally, "two hundred denarii." "The denarius was a silver coin worth about a day's wage for a laborer; this would be an amount worth about eight month's pay" (NET Bible, 6:7, 10.)
- 6:10** - "*People/Men*" (*Gk. anthropous, andres*). John uses two different words for people/men in this passage. The first is the more general word, anthropous, denoting all the people including women and children that were there. The second word, andres, more specifically refers to men. It was normal to only count men in attendance.

## Background

**Link with Elisha** - "Another little known (but highly significant) feature of John's account of the feeding of the multitude is the unmistakable allusion made to Elisha's miraculous feeding recounted in 2 Kings: 4:42-44. Allusions can be verified by explicit verbal links between two passages; in the present case, the most obvious connection is provided by the word *paidarion*, "boy," used in the New Testament only here (6:9), but used several times in the Septuagint translation of the 2 Kings passage (there referring to Elisha's servant). Other links are the mention of barley and the overall mode of narration, including a question of disbelief, the command to distribute the loaves, and the fact that all ate with food left to spare" (Kostenberg, 99).

**Passover** - Both the miraculous feeding of the five thousand and Jesus' walking on water are set within the context of the Passover Festival. There are three Passover's in John's description of Jesus' ministry. For the first (2:13) and third (11:55) Jesus is in Jerusalem, but he spends the middle Passover, here, around Galilee. See Passover in notes on John 2:12-25.

**Make him King** - "Jesus, knowing that his "hour" had not yet come... withdrew again up the mountainside alone. The ministry of miracles in Galilee, ending with this, the multiplication of the bread (the last public miracle in Galilee recorded by John) aroused such a popular response that there was danger of an uprising. This would have given the authorities a legal excuse to arrest Jesus. The nature of Jesus' kingship will become an issue again in the passion narrative of the Fourth Gospel (John 18:33ff.). Furthermore, the volatile reaction of the Galileans to the signs prepares for and foreshadows the misunderstanding of the miracle itself, and even the misunderstanding of Jesus' explanation of it (John 6:22-71)." (NET Bible, 6:15)

## Devotional Thoughts John 6:1-24

### Abundance

The main theme of the feeding of the five thousand is the promise of abundance that is only found in Jesus. This is demonstrated with the twelve basketfuls of leftovers. Twelve is the number of promise and the leftovers speak to the overflowing provision from God. Jesus continues to teach "whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (6:35). Yet, he clarifies that he means more than just to give abundance to our physical well-being. He is concerned with eternal life. How has your seeking and believing in Jesus given you the abundant food and drink of his kingdom?

### "Terrified"

In the notes for non-believers we noticed that the disciple's reaction to Jesus walking on the water is fear. This is actually a fairly common reaction to Jesus throughout the Gospels. Yet, Jesus comforts the disciples by saying, "It is I, do not be afraid." In his power Jesus is terrifying. It is only in our recognition of who he is that we learn not to be afraid. How does this concept relate to what John will later write in a letter "There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18)? In what ways in your life has growing intimacy with Jesus reduced your level of fear?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 6:1-24

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 13

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### Opening Question

- What is your favorite thing about spring?

### In the Word: Read John 6:1-24

- Based on the information John has given us, describe the scene for the feeding of the five thousand. What does it look like on the mountainside? What is the “feel” of this setting?
  - How is the Passover feast related to the two stories in this text?
- What is the significance that there are twelve baskets full of bread leftover?
- Why does Jesus refuse to allow the people to make him king?
  - Do you think there is any significance to the fact that this is the last public ministry Jesus performs in Galilee according to John?
- How would you describe the disciple’s reaction when they see Jesus walk on the water?
- These two miracles, the feeding of the five thousand and walking on water, happen back to back. How do these two stories relate to one another? What commonalities and differences do you find?

### In Our Walk

- The main theme of the feeding of the five thousand is the promise of abundance that is only found in Jesus. This is demonstrated with the twelve baskets of leftovers. Twelve is the number of promise and the leftovers speak to the overflowing provision from God. Jesus continues to teach “whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (6:35). Yet, he clarifies that he means more than just to give abundance to our physical well-being. He is concerned with eternal life. How has seeking and believing in Jesus given you the abundant food and drink of his kingdom?
- The disciple’s reaction to Jesus walking on the water is fear. This is actually a fairly common reaction to Jesus throughout the Gospels. Yet, Jesus comforts the disciples by saying, “It is I, do not be afraid.” In his power, Jesus is terrifying. It is only in our recognition of who he is that we learn not to be afraid. How does this concept relate to what John will later write in 1 John 4:18, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear?”
  - In what ways in your life has growing intimacy with Jesus reduced your level of fear?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- Most scholars find 2 Kings 4:42-44 and Isaiah 25 as the background to the feeding of the five thousand. How do you see these two scriptures relating to the scripture at hand?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that God will give us the eyes to see the abundance that he has given us through Christ.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 6:25-59}

## Notes:

### Background

**Jewish Interpretation** - The foundation of the bread of life discourse occurs in 6:31 when the Jewish crowds ask Jesus to perform another sign because “he gave them bread from heaven to eat.” This phrase appears to be a formulated quotation of Psalm 78:24-25. Jesus takes the verse they have quoted to him and does standard Jewish, Midrash commentary by expanding upon each phrase within the verse. This is supported by the final words by John that Jesus was teaching in the synagogue (6:59). The whole bread of life discourse is Jesus’ interpretation and teaching from this verse as illustrated in the following table:

"He"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Vs. 32-33.</li> <li>•Not Moses but God.</li> </ul>
"gave them"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Vs. 35-40.</li> <li>•Jesus has been given, but also they have been given to Jesus.</li> </ul>
"bread from heaven"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Vs. 41-51.</li> <li>•Jesus is the bread from heaven.</li> <li>•This bread provides eternal sustenance.</li> </ul>
"to eat"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Vs. 52-59.</li> <li>•They must eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus for eternal life.</li> </ul>

### Non-Believers

**Eternal Life** - A common misconception is that Christians believe eternal life happens when the soul ascends to be with God in heaven after a person dies but Jesus actually teaches about having eternal life at the resurrection of the physical body. Modern medicine has been working diligently in the field of longevity to discover a “fountain of youth” drug or diet. Interestingly enough, this is closer to what Jesus was talking about when he speaks of eternal life. Do you believe that humanity can discover a drug for eternal life? What authority could Jesus possibly have to offer a diet for eternal life?

## Weekly Schedule Week 14

### Thursday-Saturday

Read and Pray the text.  
Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

Work through the provided notes.

### Monday-Tuesday

Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.

### Wednesday

At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.

### Additional Resources:

With your kids (or by yourself) watch the wonderful description of the Sabbath and Manna done for Children by LIFE Church:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqyfxpuZar0>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 6:36** - "*Me*" (*Gk. mou*). There are some manuscripts that do not have "me" here leaving the subject empty, which is common in Greek. Thus, what they have seen might point back to the signs. Yet, there is enough support to keep the "me" in place.
- 6:40** - "*Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.*" "Notice that here the result (having eternal life and being raised up at the last day) is produced by looking on the Son and believing in him. Compare John 6:54 where the same result is produced by eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood. This suggests that the phrase in 6:54 (eats my flesh and drinks my blood) is to be understood in terms of the phrase here (looks on the Son and believes in him)." (NET Bible, 6:40, 62).
- 6:44** - "*draws them*" (*Gk. elkw*). Can also mean to attract or pull.
- 6:10** - "*Eat my flesh/Drink my blood.*" This tends to be used in association with the Lord's Supper and though this association is suitable it is not direct. In other words, Jesus might not explicitly mean the Lord's Supper though the theological purpose is uniform.

## Commentary

**Bread of Life** - There are three ways in which the metaphor of the bread of life would have been understood. First, bread is simply the sustenance for life. Bread was the basic substance of most meals in the ancient world and without it there was no life (see Devotional Thought). Second, the bread of life recalls the manna given in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4; Neh. 9:15). This also carried an eschatological (end times) connotation (Rev. 2:17). In early Christian thought, the people of God would eat the manna of God for all the ages. Third, in Jewish teaching the personified Wisdom is affiliated with the bread of life. The ancient Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (a contemporary of Jesus) connected Wisdom with heavenly food. In the Wisdom of Sirach (3<sup>rd</sup> Cent. BC Jewish Writing) Wisdom says, "Those who eat of me will hunger for more, and those who drink of me will thirst for more."

**Feeding the Masses** - The context for Jesus' fleeing after the miraculous feeding is that the crowds wish to make him King. When they find him again on the other side of the lake, they once again ask for another feeding sign. This is not a surprise as "Roman emperors and other politicians kept the Roman people pacified with free food... clients in return sought to advance their patrons' political ambitions (which makes sense of 6:15)" (Keener, 676).

**True Bread** - Jesus contends that God is the only one who can give "true bread" (6:32). Adding true before a common Jewish concept to relate it to the new teaching of Jesus is a common technique in John. Jesus is "true light" (1:9), Spirit filled disciples of Jesus are "true worshipers" (4:23), and Jesus is the "true vine" (15:1).

## Devotional Thoughts John 6:25-59

### Bread of Life

In our contemporary culture, we seldom eat to actually sustain life. Rather, we eat out of a desire for taste, satisfaction, or health. When was the last time your judgment of a meal was determined by whether or not it kept you alive? Because of this, we miss the depth of what Jesus is saying. Bread was the core of most ancient meals. People starved to death without bread. How would it change your understanding of bread of life, if you lived meal to meal?

### "Superfoods"

Health magazine describes superfoods as "nutrient powerhouses that pack large doses of antioxidants, polyphenols, vitamins, and minerals. Eating them may reduce the risk of chronic disease, and prolong life" (<http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0,,20306775,00.html>). I don't know if superfoods are real or not, but the sudden infatuation with them demonstrates a reality that what we eat is innately connected to our physical health. The same is true with our spiritual walk. What I eat and drink spiritually is innately connected with my spiritual health. What does Jesus mean that we must eat his flesh and drink his blood? How is Jesus the spiritual superfood?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 6:25-59

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 14

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### Opening Question

- If you were stranded on an island and you only had one food to eat for the rest of your life what would it be?

### In the Word: Read John 6:25-59 (You might break this up into chunks.)

- Why do the crowds want Jesus to perform another sign?
  - How does Jesus react to their desire?
- What is the work of God?
- What does it mean to eat the flesh of Jesus and drink his blood?
  - Within the Gospel of John there is no Lord's Supper. This only occurs in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Thus, some scholars find this discourse to be John's account of Jesus' teaching on the Lord's Supper. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

### In Our Walk

- In our contemporary culture we seldom eat for the actual sustaining of life. Rather, we eat out of a desire for taste, satisfaction, or health. Because of this we miss the depth of what Jesus is saying. Bread was the core of most ancient meals. Without bread people starved to death.
  - When was the last time your judgment of a meal was determined by whether it kept you alive?
  - How would it change your understanding of bread of life, if you lived meal to meal?
- Health magazine describes a superfood as “nutrient powerhouses that pack large doses of antioxidants, polyphenols, vitamins, and minerals. Eating them may reduce the risk of chronic disease, and prolong life” (<http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0,,20306775,00.html>). I don't know if superfoods are real or not, but the sudden infatuation with them demonstrates a reality that *what we eat is innately connected to our physical health*. How is this also true with our spiritual health?
  - What does Jesus mean that we must eat his flesh and drink his blood?
  - How is Jesus the spiritual superfood? *I know... you saw it coming. ;-)*

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- Jesus is teaching at the synagogue in Capernaum. As such, he is functioning as an interpreter of the law. Thus, the entire bread of life discourse is his exposition (expanded teaching) of the crowd's scriptural assertion “he gave them bread from heaven to eat” (6:30). How do you see vs. 31-58 as explaining the meaning of vs. 30?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that God will give us the eyes to see the abundance that he has given us through Christ.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 6:60-71}

## Notes:

### Background

**Jesus' Teaching** - Interestingly enough, conflict throughout the Gospel of John usually comes in response to Jesus' teaching not his miraculous working. This is true again in chapter six. The miraculous feeding amasses a large crowd but his teaching drives them away. They complain, "this is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" The teaching is not hard in understanding, but hard in following or doing. This is the final follow up question to their initial inquiry "what must we do to do the works God requires?" The response is not what they expect. To be a disciple of Jesus is to believe in him as the one sent of God, the bread from heaven. Though one would expect the keeping of the law or rigorous moralism to be difficult, it is believing in Jesus that is difficult for the disciples. Yet, Jesus refuses to make his teaching more palatable in order to keep the crowds.

**Shamefulness of a Teacher** - "A teacher derived status from the success and loyalty of his disciples; hence abandonment by his disciples invited dishonor in the broader community. By discouraging the less committed disciples with parabolic language, Jesus prepared a nucleus of disciples who should persevere" (Keener, 696). Jesus is not concerned about worldly honor and shame, because he desires only to honor the father (5:19-23) through doing the will of the father (6:35-40).

### Non-Believers

**Popularity vs. Polarity** - "If everybody was jumping off a cliff, would you do it too?" That old adage is wiser than we often give it credit. It is amazing how often people make decisions for popularity even when they know it is a bad choice. Rather than be polarized from their friends and family by standing against the crowd, people choose poorly to belong and be popular. If you think about the miracles Jesus performed, he could have been the most popular man that ever lived. Imagine how much people would like someone who healed them of all their ills and gave them unlimited food. Yet, Jesus was polarizing more than he ever was popular. Why do you think Jesus was this way? What about his teaching was polarizing?

## Weekly Schedule Week 15

### Thursday-Saturday

Read and Pray the text.  
Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

Work through the provided notes.

### Monday-Tuesday

Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.

### Wednesday

At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.

**Additional Resources:**  
Nothing worth checking out this week, sorry!

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 6:60** - *“teaching” (Gk. logos).* Literally, “word.” Does this relate to John 1:1? John uses logos forty times and not all of them refer to the incarnate word as logos is a commonly used word for teaching or instruction.
- 6:66** - *“turned back and no longer followed him.”* Literally, “went back to what lay behind and were no longer walking with him.”
- 6:67** - *“do you?”* There is no “do you” in the original text because in Greek you can expect or anticipate a negative answer by adding a word to the front of the sentence, which is what occurs here.
- 6:70** - *“a devil” (Gk. diabolos).* There is no “a” in this statement. Jesus simply says “one of you is devil” or “one of you is the devil.” This is standard figurative language for Jesus.
- 6:71** - *“Iscairiot.”* “At least six explanations for the name Iscairiot have been proposed, but it is probably transliterated Hebrew with the meaning “man of Kerioth” (there are at least two villages that had that name).” NET Bible, 6:71, 120.

**The Disciples** - “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him” (6:66). This verse appears to be a turning point in the Gospel of John. Jesus has been gathering disciples all the while he is trying to teach what it truly means for someone to be his disciple (4:27-38). As we enter into chapter six, Jesus has a large crowd following him but heads up to the mountainside to be with his disciples (6:3). Jesus’ question to Philip serves not only the immediate context but the following narrative and dialogue as well (6:5). The narrator, John, lets us into the secret that Jesus is testing his disciples. The following passages explain further that Jesus can provide all that is needed to sustain his disciples not only for the present but for eternity. Yet, he refuses to do this under their conditions (6:14-15) or to soften his position (6:61-63). Only when a person believes in Jesus as the one God sent can they become his disciple. This reaches a climax as Jesus turns to the twelve and questions their allegiance. Peter, as the spokesman, affirms their position, “to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!” (6:68). True disciples of Jesus gather the abundance (6:12-13), recognize Jesus and let him in their boat (6:21), are drawn by the Father to the Son (6:44), eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man (6:53-57), and “live forever” (6:58).

**The Holy One of God** - In Peter’s reply to Jesus he affirms his belief that Jesus is the “holy one of God.” In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Peter uses the title “Christ,” which was a standard Jewish title meaning the anointed one, but his profession is slightly different in John for two possible reasons. First, in John, Peter appears to be wrestling more with who Jesus is in contrast to the Jewish expectations of him especially after he has just refused to be made king (6:15). Second, John is writing to a Greco-Roman audience and uses language that they will better understand.

## Devotional Thoughts John 6:60-71

### Tested

Sometimes God is testing us. I think Jesus does this three times in chapter six. First, he asks Philip where they will buy food (6:5-6). Second, he tests their recognition of him in the stormy sea (6:16-21). Finally, he tested them by asking them if they were going to turn back (6:67). According to James 1, testing produces perseverance. How has your belief in Jesus been tested in your life?

### Perseverance

We are too hard on ourselves too often especially in regard to our Christian faith. After many disciples “went back to what lay behind” and “were not walking with him” (see text notes 6:66), Jesus looks at this ragamuffin group of twelve and simply asks if they are going to leave as well. Peter’s reply is tentative at first but grows in conviction. He says, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” There is a simplicity to discipleship that we can’t forget: believe that Jesus is the only way to eternal life (6:29). That’s it. If you believe in him, you will seek to walk with him and if you don’t believe in him you will go back to what lays behind. Jesus delights in genuine perseverance. In what ways have you persevered when you could have turned back? How has your perseverance honored God?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 6:60-71

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 15

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### Opening Question

- When have you quit something? Or, committed to do something and you didn't do it?

### In the Word: Read John 6:60-71

- What was so hard about Jesus' teaching that the disciples couldn't accept it?
- What would be so offensive about seeing "the Son of Man ascend to where he was before?"
- As you look back through what Jesus has just taught in 6:25-58, how are these words full of spirit and life?
- Why was Jesus not more concerned that people stopped following him?
- In what ways have you seen Jesus testing his disciples throughout chapter six?

### In Our Walk

- Sometimes God is testing us. I think Jesus does this at least three times in chapter six. First, he asks Philip where they will buy food (6:5-6). Second, he tests their recognition of him in the stormy sea (6:16-21). Finally, he tested them by asking them if they were going to turn back (6:67). Why would Jesus test his disciples?
  - How has God tested your belief in times of abundance?
  - How has God tested your belief in times of stormy seas?
  - How has God tested your belief in times of hard teaching where you had to go against the crowds?
- It would seem that by contemporary measures, Jesus is not a very successful minister because so many people leave. What measures success in ministry by Jesus' standards?
  - How do we more effectively measure our ministry by Jesus' standard?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- After many disciples "went back to what lay behind" and "were not walking with him." Jesus looks at this ragamuffin group of twelve and simply asks if they are going to leave as well. Peter says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." There is a simplicity to discipleship that we can't forget: believe that Jesus is the only way to eternal life (6:29). That's it. If you believe in him, you will seek to walk with him and if you don't believe in him you will go back to what lays behind. Jesus delights in genuine perseverance. In what ways have you persevered when you could have turned back? How has your perseverance honored God?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can persevere as we are tested by God.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 7:1-52}

## Notes:

### Background

**Feast of Tabernacles** – John leaves a six month absence of describing Jesus’ work as the narrative moves directly from the Passover in the spring to the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall. The feast of tabernacles occurred 5 days after the Day of Atonement and celebrated the abundant harvest from God. During this time the people remembered the wilderness wandering by living in booths (small huts) and remembering that God had provided and protected them during the wilderness. The celebration was to last for eight days beginning on a Sabbath and ending on a Sabbath with a large food offering on the second Sabbath. For discussion on the greatest day of the festival see Text Notes 7:37. See Leviticus 23:33-44 for detailed instructions concerning the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles.

**Where he comes from** – The major issue the Jewish leaders have with Jesus in John 7 is that they know where he comes from, Nazareth of Galilee. Their close-minded interpretation of the prophets does not allow for a prophet to come from Galilee because they cannot think beyond the external appearances and into the reality of the kingdom of God.

### Non-Believers

**Nicodemus** – Nicodemus plays an interesting role in John. He appears three times. First, he enters into a lengthy discussion with Jesus concerning what God desires of a person (John 3:1-21). During this dialogue, Nicodemus apparently does not decide to follow Jesus. Second, Nicodemus appears in the narrative of John 7. The Jewish leaders are furious with Jesus and want to arrest him, but Nicodemus stands up for Jesus by simply asking if Jesus shouldn’t receive a hearing first. Finally, Nicodemus will play a vital role in Jesus’ burial that demonstrates his belief in Jesus. Sometimes people think that they have to make an instant decision about Jesus, but Nicodemus demonstrates a person who really processes who Jesus claims to be. He does not rush into believing in Jesus, but in the end will make a bold statement about his belief in him as we will see. Why is it important to really process the claims of Jesus before professing belief in him?

## Weekly Schedule Week 16

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**This is a rather lengthy, but worthwhile listen by Kenneth Boa on John 7 from a Spiritual Perspective:**  
<https://bible.org/seriespage/john-chapter-7>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 7:8** - "You go." Literally, "You go up." Though Jerusalem was south it was customary to always speak of going up to Jerusalem due to the altitude and significance of the city.
- 7:8** - "time is not yet fully come." This is a rare occurrence in which John does not use the word "hour." It might be that this is not a glory reference and instead he is simply talking about his time to go to the festival.
- 7:27** - "We know where this man comes from." In standard Johannine style the crowds are confused about something John's audience already knows. According to John 1:1-18, Jesus has come from the Father.
- 7:37** - "greatest day." "There is a problem with the identification of this reference to the last day of the feast, the greatest day: It appears from Deut 16:13 that the feast went for seven days. Lev 23:36, however, makes it plain that there was an eighth day, though it was mentioned separately from the seven. It is not completely clear whether the seventh or eighth day was the climax of the feast, called here by the author the "last great day of the feast." Since according to the Mishnah (m. Sukkah 4.1) the ceremonies with water and lights did not continue after the seventh day, it seems more probable that this is the day the author mentions." NET Bible, 7:37, 101.
- 7:37-38** - There are two versions of translating these important verses based upon punctuation, which is absent in the earliest versions. The eastern interpretation places the source of the living water as the one who believes in Jesus. The western interpretation finds the source as Jesus. The western seems more in line with other teaching in John.
- 7:38** - "within them" (*Gk. Koilia*). Literally, "womb" or "belly."

## Theme

**Seek** - There is an intentional play throughout this narrative with the word "zeteo" (seek) that goes unnoticed in contemporary translations. The narrative begins with Jesus' brothers critique that a person who *seeks* to be known publicly does not do things in secret. The Jewish leaders then *seek* him (7:11, 30) in order that they might kill him (7:1, 19, 20, 25). Jesus critiques the crowds for *seeking* to honor themselves (7:18). In contrast the only thing Jesus *seeks* is to honor the one who sent him (7:18). The irony is that those who are *seeking* him in order to kill him will not be able to find him because they can't go where he will be (7:34). What disciples of Jesus *seek* is a common question in John (1:38; 4:23, 27; 5:30, 44; 6:24, 26).

**Circumcision and the Sabbath** - In 7:23, Jesus returns to the original reason the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem are trying to kill him; he healed a man on the Sabbath (5:1-15). The Mishnah (teaching on the law) allowed a child to be circumcised on the Sabbath. Jesus uses the argument of *qal wahomer* (from lesser to greater) to argue how much greater it is to heal the whole body and not just one of the 248 body parts the Rabbis counted (NET Bible, 7:23, 57).

## Devotional Thoughts John 7:1-52

### External Appearances

This narrative is full of issues of external appearances. First, Jesus is critiqued by his brothers for not going to Jerusalem as a public figure. Next, the plans of the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus are in secret but Jesus' miracle was public. No one in the crowds will say good things about Jesus publicly for fear of the leaders. Finally, Jesus goes public and challenges the crowd in the temple to not make their judgment upon external appearance but upon righteousness. How often do we judge based upon external appearances and not righteousness? What does righteous judgment look like?

### Spirit

Jesus says that living waters will flow within the person who believes in him because they are drinking from the source of living water. John clarifies for us that he is talking about the Spirit that is only given after Jesus' was glorified. As you think through the water motif in John (2:1-9; 3:5; 4:10-15), how does the Spirit as living water help us interpret those passages?

Jesus appears to quote Isaiah 58:11. Take a minute to read Isaiah 58:11. How does this passage relate to the gift of the Holy Spirit?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 7:1-52

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 16

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### Opening Question

- Have you ever had someone try to kill you or someone you love? What was that like?

### In the Word: Read John 7:1-52

- Why are the Jewish leaders trying to kill Jesus?
- Why does Jesus not want to go up to the festival?
- Are Jesus' brothers on his side or not?
- How does the context of the Feast of Tabernacles explain Jesus' teaching in this chapter?
- Jesus says that living waters will flow within the person who believes in him because they are drinking from the source of living water. John clarifies for us that he is talking about the Spirit that is only given after Jesus was glorified.
  - As you think through the water motif in John (2:1-9; 3:5; 4:10-15), how does the Spirit as living water help us interpret those passages?
  - Jesus appears to quote Isaiah 58:11. Take a minute to read Isaiah 58:11. How does this passage relate to the gift of the Holy Spirit?

### In Our Walk

- This narrative is full of issues of external appearances. First, Jesus is critiqued by his brothers for not going to Jerusalem as a public figure. Next, the plans of the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus are in secret but Jesus' miracle was public. Then, no one in the crowds will say good things about Jesus publicly for fear of the leaders. Finally, Jesus goes public and challenges the crowd in the temple to not make their judgment upon external appearance but upon righteousness.
  - How often do we judge based upon external appearances and not righteousness?
  - What does righteous judgment look like?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- There is an intentional play throughout this narrative with the word "zeteo" (seek) that goes unnoticed in contemporary translations. Read through all of the uses of this word in this chapter: 7:1, 4, 11, 18, 19, 20, 25, 30, 34, 36. What irony do you see when you link all these verses together?
  - What disciples of Jesus seek is a common question in John (1:38; 4:23, 27; 5:30, 44; 6:24, 26). How does this passage relate to the other times where the disciples are "seeking?"

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can be people who judge in righteousness and not from external appearances.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 7:53-8:11}

## Notes:

**Textual Problems** - Nearly every modern translation of the Bible provides a comment concerning the textual integrity of 7:53-8:11 and there is nearly unanimous belief in scholarship that this text was *not* originally part of John. There are five main reasons for this understanding. First, the earliest and best manuscripts including all of the Greek manuscripts do not have these verses. Second, some manuscripts that do have this narrative have it in various places such as John 7:36; 21:25; Luke 21:38; 24:53. Third, the language in this narrative is distinctively different from the rest of John. For example, the word scribes (8:3, poorly translated “teachers of the law” in NIV) occurs nowhere else in John despite plenty of opportune places. Fourth, it seriously interrupts the flow of John 7:52 to 8:12. The narrative moves more consistently and John-like directly from 7:52 to 8:12. Fifth, no allusions to this story occur again in John unlike the similar temple event of 5:1-9.

**Is it part of the Word of God?** - That 7:53-8:11 is in John but not in the original text is an issue that Christians cannot ignore as modern critics have used this type of textual questioning to support strong anti-Christian agendas. Our ignorance has not been helpful. Five points should be made in regard to this issue. First, modern Christian scholarship hesitancy to include this narrative is precisely an argument in support of Biblical authenticity. Issues such as these are not hidden or ignored. Rather, they display contemporary Christianity’s faithful scrutiny for historical accuracy. Second, each and every narrative within scripture went through a process of oral transmission prior to its written form. Thus, there was undoubtedly a number of orally shared stories from Jesus’ ministry that could not be included in the costly and rare written form (John 21:25). Yet, it appears this story was of such significance to early Christians that it continued to be generationally shared despite not occurring in a written form. Third, this story is consistent with the nature of Jesus as portrayed in other Gospel stories. Fourth, the Christian faith is not in the Bible, it is in the person of Jesus. The Bible is a witness to the person of Jesus. Fifth, we have this story referenced as early as the third century and, possibly, even second century which allows for oral transmission to still be plausible and reliable.

## Weekly Schedule Week 17

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

**Additional Resources:**  
**A wonderful article on what to do with this text is available online, search:**  
**Carl B. Bridges, “The Canonical Status of the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 7:53-8:11)” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 11 (2008): 213-221.**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 8:1** - *“Mount of Olives.”* This is a long hill that runs north to south nearly two miles east of Jerusalem.
- 8:3** - *“Teachers of the law”* (Gk. grammeteu). Literally, “Scribes.” As mentioned this word is never used in the Gospel of John.
- 8:4** - *“Caught in the act of adultery.”* The scribes and Pharisees make it abundantly clear that this woman was actually caught in the act so that there could be no discrepancy concerning her lawful status according to the law.
- 8:5** - *“In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women.”* Actually, the law (Lev 20:10) says, “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife – with the wife of his neighbor – both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death.” Yet, the Scribes and Pharisees did not bring the man involved even though the woman had been “caught in the act” (8:4).
- 8:17** - *“Woman”* (Gk. gunai). This is a polite and standard word for “woman” best understood as ma’am or madam in English.

## NOTES

**Stoned to Death** - The Jewish law (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-24) commands a death sentence for adultery. “Early Jewish teachers commented extensively on the dangers of women’s adultery. Some women were reportedly executed (albeit illegally, from the standpoint of the Roman administration) in Jewish Palestine, and the charge was most often adultery. Because Jewish teachers were scrupulous about the law of witnesses (Deut 17:6), it was important for the accusers to note that the woman had been caught ‘in the act’ (8:4), yet that the accusers had not brought the man, who should also be executed, suggests a trap or other dishonesty on their part... If Jesus opposes her execution, he must explain why he reduces a sentence in the law of Moses; if he approves her execution, he can be viewed as usurping Roman prerogatives in the name of returning to God’s law, hence charged with treason.” (Keener, *John*, 736-737).

**Writing in the Dirt** - There are dozens of theories as to what Jesus wrote in the ground. Some say he is simply buying time for the crowds to calm while slowly writing in the ground. Others say he is writing the law using the imagery of the finger of God from Ex. 31:18; Deut. 9:10. Some have contended that he is drawing a long line to show those standing for and against her. Others argue that he is acting as a Roman judge writing his verdict before speaking it based upon the word for writing, katagrapho, which can also be translated “to write an accusation.” Thus, Jesus was composing a verdict in Roman judicial style. Some early church fathers comment that he is writing each individual’s sins among the crowd. The truth is... we don’t know! Get over it!

## Devotional Thoughts John 7:53-8:11

### Sexual Sin

One of the main issues that the church has always faced concerns how to deal with sexual sin. Paul deals with this extensively in 1 Corinthians and this issue is still prevalent in the church today. What can this story teach us about how to deal with sexual sin in the church? First, Jesus does not condone sexual sin as a “life choice.” Rather, he acknowledges the reality of the woman’s sin. *How does our culture treat sexual sin?* Second, Jesus does not regard her sexual sin as distinct from the entire problem of sin (8:6-10). *How often in your life or the life of the church have you seen sexual sin treated differently?* Third, Jesus does not allow the truth to be distorted. The scribes and Pharisees say the woman was caught in the act of adultery and should be stoned (8:3-5). Yet, they intentionally distort the law (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-24) that says both the man and woman should be put to death. *In what ways do we often distort the truth with regard to sexual sin in our lives and the lives of others?* Finally, Jesus does not condemn those trapped in sexual sin though he has the right too. As sinners, we do not have the right to condemn those around us, but as sinless, Jesus does (8:11). *In your sinfulness, how have you received the grace of Jesus?*



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 7:53-8:11

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 17

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### Opening Question

- When is a time in your life when you deserved punishment but received grace?

### In the Word: Read John 7:53-8:11

- Nearly all Biblical scholars believe this passage was not originally in the Gospel according to John for a multitude of legitimate reasons including that *none* of the earliest manuscripts have it. How should we as Christians treat this story about Jesus and the woman caught in adultery?
- In this story how are the Scribes and Pharisees setting a trap for Jesus?
  - How does Jesus avoid this trap?
- Read Deuteronomy 22:22-24 and Leviticus 20:10. This is the legal context for the present dilemma. How do the Scribes and Pharisees distort the law when they present the woman before Jesus?
- Why do you think the oldest of the group leave first?

### In Our Walk

- One of the major issues that the church has always struggled with and against is sexual sin. What does this story teach us about how we should respond to people trapped in sexual sin within the church?
- What do you think Jesus wrote in the ground?
  - If it was you who was caught in your sin and brought before Jesus, what do you think he would write?

### For the Non-Believer

- What our culture calls sexual identity and what Christians refer to as sexual sin tend to be the same thing. I know of multiple occasions in which adultery has been recommended by secular counselors on the basis of “following your heart.” Likewise, the legitimization of homosexuality in our culture has placed Christians in a difficult position. How do we as Christians provide grace to people who don’t believe they need it?
  - Likewise, how do we as Christians offer grace without legitimizing sinfulness?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can have the strength of the character that Jesus displays.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 8:12-8:30}

## Notes:

### Motif

**Light of the World** - Continuing directly from 7:52, Jesus again speaks to the crowds in the temple courts during the Feast of Tabernacles. Despite the Pharisees' schemes against him (7:45-52), Jesus boldly declares, "I am the light of the world" (8:12). Light and darkness have been a prevalent theme throughout John up to this point (1:4-9; 3:19-21; 5:35). Kostenberger provides five useful points on this motif in its present occurrence. First, this calls back to the prologues announcement of the light of the world in creation. Second, the contrast between light and dark is an obvious contrast between good and evil and each person's choice to walk in one or the other. Third, "John uses the symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles, in particular torch-lighting ceremonies, to point out how Jesus fulfills the essence of various Jewish festivals" ( 114). Fourth, the light motif anticipates the healing of the man born blind that will occur in chapter 9 and the escalating conflict between the Pharisees lost in darkness and the followers of Jesus in the light. Finally, John will again utilize the light and dark motif in the resurrection of Lazarus (11:9-10).

### For the Non-Believer

**Is it part of the Word of God?** - One of the main issues that we see throughout the Gospel according to John is the witnesses that testify Jesus is who he claims to be. In this narrative, he claims he is the light of the world. Yet, the Pharisees (Jewish religious zealots) immediately reprimand him by saying, "here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid." In the Jewish legal system, a person could not serve as a witness on his own behalf. Sometimes in our spiritual focus in reading these texts we forget that when Jesus makes these claims he is in fact breaking the law by blaspheming because there was no separation between church and state. Is there a time when a person should be able to serve as their own witness? If Jesus really is who he is claiming to be, who could serve as a reliable witness on his behalf?

## Weekly Schedule Week 18

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.  
Follow the Lectio Divina, if  
needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided  
notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers,  
thoughts, or even your own  
commentary on the text. Work  
through the devotional thoughts  
on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in  
group discussion over the text.**

**Additional Resources:  
Watch or listen to the  
wonderful song, "Light of  
the World" by Lauren Daigle:  
[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=\\_cLhaZIBSpo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cLhaZIBSpo)**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**8:12** - "When Jesus spoke again." Once again, 8:12 should be read as immediately following the narrative ending in 7:52 with 7:53-8:11 as an interpolation added later (see notes on 7:53-8:11).

**8:13** - "Never" (Gk. *ou mh*). This is an emphatic phrase in the original language, "**NEVER!**" This is in comparison to the times when the Jews have walked in darkness.

**8:15** - "human standards" (Gk. *kata ten sarka*). Literally, "according to the flesh."

**8:20** - "time" (Gk. *wra*). Literally, "hour."

**8:21** - "look for me" (Gk. *zeteo me*). Literally, "seek me." This seeking Jesus motif is once again brought forward. In 1:38 Jesus asks the disciples what they seek and in 4:38 the disciples refuse to ask Jesus what he was seeking of the Samaritan woman. Now Jesus proclaims there will be a time when people will seek him but he won't be able to be found.

## NOTES

**Witnesses** - In Deut. 17:6 and 19:15 the law reads, "On the testimony of two or three witnesses a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness" and "One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

Thus, the Pharisees are correct that Jesus must establish two witnesses, but they are wrong because Jesus has already done that. In John 5, when Jesus was last teaching in the temple courts, he has already pointed to multiple witnesses including his father and his works (see notes on John 5:16-47).

John is once again illustrating the Pharisees ignorance on important matters. They have already displayed ignorance in regard to Jesus not being a prophet because a prophet cannot come from Galilee (7:52, check Jonah) and will again show ignorance when they declare they have never been anyone's slaves (8:33, check Egyptian, Persian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Greek, Roman).

**Feast of Tabernacles and Torch Lighting** - It seems odd that Jesus suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, returns to the light motif. Yet, the switch is not as sudden if we understand Jesus to still be in the midst of the Feast of Tabernacles. "If the Feast of Tabernacles is at all relevant to the image, as many commentators suggest, light was also associated with the torchlight ceremony in the court of women in the temple during that festival. Jesus apparently uttered this declaration near the court of women, for the temple treasury (8:20) was adjacent to it. As commentators often observe, this lighting celebration commemorated the pillar of fire in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21; cf. Ps 78:14; 105:39; Neh 9:12, 19), which recalls other Johannine images such as water (4:14; 7:38) and manna (6:32)" (Keener, 739).

## Devotional Thoughts John 8:12-30

### Knowing God

In response to the Pharisees questioning of who is Jesus' father, Jesus replies, "You do not know me or my father... if you knew me, you would know my Father also." The Pharisees fail to recognize Jesus because they are comparing Jesus to their concept of God instead of allowing Jesus to define who God is.

In his convicting work, *A Fellowship of Different*, Scot McKnight writes:

*We don't know Jesus is God because we know who God is, but we know who God is because we know Jesus! Jesus, the Gospel of John tells us, is the very incarnation of God. We see God perfectly in Jesus. We need to be asking the question: Is our view of God like Jesus?*

McKnight's question is spot on: *Is our view of God like Jesus?*

Or are we like the Pharisees who have a concept of who God is and are constantly comparing Jesus to their understanding of God to see if he matches up?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 8:12-30

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 18

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### Opening Question

- In what specific way are you like your mom or dad?

### In the Word: Read John 8:12-30

- What does Jesus mean when he says he is the light of the world?
- Throughout this passage, Jesus makes a multitude of “I am” statements. Who does Jesus say he is and isn’t?
- Why do the Jews struggle to understand who Jesus is?
- Where is Jesus going that others could not go? *Hint: It is not heaven.*
- How does where Jesus is going relate to who he is claiming to be?

### In Our Walk

- In response to the Pharisees’ questioning of who is Jesus’ father, Jesus replies, “You do not know me or my father... if you knew me, you would know my Father also.” The Pharisees fail to recognize Jesus because they are comparing Jesus to their concept of God instead of allowing Jesus to define who God is. In his convicting work, *A Fellowship of Differents*, Scot McKnight writes, “We don’t know Jesus is God because we know who God is, but we know who God is because we know Jesus! Jesus, the Gospel of John tells us, is the very incarnation of God. We see God perfectly in Jesus. We need to be asking the question: Is our view of God like Jesus?”
  - How do we struggle with letting Jesus define God for us?
  - In what diverse ways throughout the Gospel of John has Jesus challenged your understanding of God?
  - How does your different understanding of God as revealed in Jesus influence the way you live your daily life?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can trust the testimony of Jesus as the Son of God.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 8:31-59}

## Notes:

### Motif

**"I Am"** - He just can't help it. As has been previously noted, Jesus is always more polarizing than he is popular. As Jesus' debate with those who believe in him (8:31) escalates, Jesus continually makes stronger and stronger claims concerning his identity and the Jews make stronger and stronger accusations against him. This reaches its climax in 8:58 when Jesus says, "before Abraham was born, I am!" Then the crowd responds by trying to stone him to death. Why are the crowds so angry? It is the way in which Jesus said what he said. It is not uncommon in the original language to say I am if there is a question preceding it or if you are describing a quality of yourself. This happens routinely in John (6:35, 48, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5). For example, in John 6:35, Jesus says "I am the bread of life." What is so disturbing in this instance is that neither of these elements are present and Jesus is making an absolute statement concerning his identity. The Jewish people would have only understood this in line with God's self-given name, the tetragrammaton, YHWH from Exodus 3:14. Though we are unclear whether Jesus said this in Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic, it certainly was too far for the Jewish crowds who immediately sought to stone him for blasphemy.

### For the Non-Believer

**Slaves** - In this narrative, the Jewish people are startled and angry when Jesus says that only if they follow him will they know the truth and the truth will set them free. They defend themselves saying, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone!" (John 8:33). This is categorically untrue as they have been slaves to the Egyptians, Persians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks and Romans. Yet, Jesus does not argue from that perspective, instead he calls them to think more deeply and introspectively about their lives. Just like the Jews, Americans tend to think of themselves as slaves to no one. Yet, if we are honest with ourselves there definitely are things we are slaves to. In your life, what holds you in slavery? What are the things or people that you can't free yourself from? What would you do to be free from these things?

## Weekly Schedule Week 19

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch this clip from the Gospel of John film (Sorry the accents are terrible):**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtMjhNekiFk>**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**8:31** - *"To the Jews who had believed."* Jesus is now conversing with those who believe, not necessarily those who are against him... yet. Just as Jesus did with the bread of life discourse in chapter six, Jesus is going to up the ante with the ones who have believed based on seeing the signs (7:31).

**8:31** - *"teaching"* (Gk. *logos*). Literally, *"continue in my word."*

**8:35** - *"slave/son."* "Jesus' point is that while a slave may be part of a family or household, the slave is not guaranteed a permanent place there, while a *son*, as a descendant or blood relative, will always be guaranteed a place in the family" (NET Bible, 8:35, 76).

**8:39** - *"then you would do."* Some important manuscripts simply have "then do" not "then you would do" implying a call to action.

**8:41** - *"We are not illegitimate children."* In comparison to Jesus who was born in their distinction illegitimately.

## NOTES

**Paternity Suit** - The Pharisees and Jewish leaders are consistently attempting to put Jesus on trial without a formal hearing (7:50-52). Kostenberger refers to it in this text as "paternity suit" against Jesus (113). Jesus is claiming that his father is God and the Pharisees are accusing him of blasphemy (8:39-41). The irony of this situation is that despite what we or the Jewish people may think, Jesus is not on trial. Instead, John makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is the judge in the lineage and role of his Father (5:22, 27, 30; 8:15-16). Instead, it is the world that is on trial! The verdict is already in, "light has come into the world, but the people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (3:19). This reversal escalates in 8:49-51 when Jesus states that the one who is concerned about glorifying Jesus is the ultimate judge. Jesus does not allow his trial to go forward, but instead issues a counter paternity suit. The crowds claim their father is Abraham (8:33, 39) and God himself (8:41). Jesus disputes this claim on the basis that they do not act or judge in line with the heritage of Abraham (8:39b-41a) nor God (8:42-43). Instead, Jesus claims that their father is the devil because they seek to murder and lie like him (8:44-45).

**Fifty Years Old** - This is not a discrepancy between Jesus actual age, but rather a standard round number used to demonstrate the vast difference between his age and the two-thousand years since Abraham. "Perhaps most importantly, in addition to emphasizing the chronological impossibility, it provides Jewish leaders a way to put Jesus in his place. Many in the Greek world considered fifty an ideal age for ruling; many Jewish offices also required a person to be at least fifty years of age, though there were exceptions... His opponents think that Jesus is too young to have seen Abraham, but they are probably also annoyed by his claims to authority despite his relative youth!" (Keener, 769).

## Devotional Thoughts John 8:12-30

### Truth will set you Free!

"FREEDOM!!!" It's hard to read this text without envisioning Mel Gibson's epic scene from *Braveheart*. As William Wallace, he fights for the freedom of Scottish people from the tyranny of the British empire. Of course, Jesus is not talking about being slaves under a physical nation, he is talking about being slaves to sin. Jesus says that knowing the truth will set us free from sin. We tend to agree with this statement especially if we can define truth in our own way. For some, truth is certain doctrinal beliefs. For others, truth is moral piety. Still for others, truth is community service or relativism. Yet, the freedom Jesus promises only comes if we also allow him to define truth for he is indeed the definition of truth. He goes on to say that freedom only comes through the son. Later in John he will define truth this way, *"I am the way and the truth and the life (14:6)*. Jesus is truth. How have you tried to define truth in your own way?

What does it mean that Jesus is truth?

How does Jesus being truth change the way you understand the phrase, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free?"

What does Jesus given freedom look like?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 8:31-59

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 19

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### Opening Question

- When is a time in your life you have gotten in trouble for telling the truth?

### In the Word: Read John 8:31-59

- Now that we have finished it, what would you say is the main theme of this chapter?
- Jesus provides a paternity test for knowing who your father is. What is the paternity test according to this passage?
- Where in this passage do the Jews display their own self-deception?
- Why does Jesus' statement, "Before Abraham was, I am," invoke such a strong response from the crowd?
  - How does the Exodus narrative and especially Exodus 3:11-17 serve as a backdrop for understanding Jesus' teaching in John 8? What common themes are there?

### In Our Walk

- Jesus says that knowing the truth will set us free from sin. We tend to only agree with this statement if we can define truth in our own way. For some, truth is certain doctrinal beliefs. For others, truth is moral piety. Still for others, truth is community service or relativism. Yet, the freedom Jesus promises only comes if we also allow him to define truth for he is indeed the definition of truth. He goes on to say that freedom only comes through the son. Later in John he will define truth this way, "I am the way and the truth and the life (14:6). Jesus is truth."
  - How have you tried to define truth in your own way?
  - What does it mean that Jesus is truth?

### For the Non-Believer ?

- Jesus says in 8:32, "you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." Truth is constantly on trial in our culture with many people saying that there is no truth except for what is true to each of us. Let's ask some tough questions.
  - Do you really want to live in a society where each person determines their own truth? Why or why not?
  - What is the relationship between truth and freedom?
  - Does personalizing truth actually allow for freedom?
  - How does Jesus continue in this passage (8:31-38) to define truth and freedom?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can allow the truth of Jesus to define God for us and liberate us from our sinfulness.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 9:1-41}

## Notes:

**Deuteronomic Theology** - The disciples' question, "who sinned this man or his parents that he was born blind?" is the foundational question for understanding all of chapter nine of John. At the heart of this question is "deuteronomic theology," which is the belief that there is a connection between sinfulness and physical ailments or between moral goodness and wealth and prosperity. This develops in Judaism through a flawed understanding of the covenant. For a man to be born blind meant that he or his family had been sinful. This is similar to the Buddhist and Hindu concept of Karma and the contemporary prosperity gospel preached by many televangelists. Jesus quickly discounts and even reverses this idea through the entire narrative of John 9. He says, "neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed." Not only is the man not a sinner, but his ailment is what allows the work of God to be displayed.

**Parents** - Do not overlook the significance of the parents in this story (9:18-23). We know three things about the parents. First, they are fearful of the power of the Pharisees (9:22). Second, they are probably not very well off as their blind child is forced to beg rather than be taken care of by the family (9:8). Third, they lived in the shame of having a son born blind. Ironically, their true shame comes not in their son being born blind but in their refusal to acknowledge Jesus. Whereas, the man born blind strengthens in resolve throughout the text, his parents will not testify to the work of Jesus in fear of the Pharisees, This was a powerful story for young Jews, Romans and Greeks who had decided to follow Jesus to the shame of their family.

## For the Non-Believer

**Fear** - By choosing to believe in Jesus, the blind man faces being shamed, tossed out of the community, and lashed forty times in public. The powers of this world have always used fear to manipulate and retain control. Yet, Jesus teaches that belief in him comes not from fear but from being made free from the power of this world like blindness. What fears hold you back in your life? Do you believe that Jesus can overcome any bondage of fear you have?

## Weekly Schedule Week 20

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Read this interesting take on why the man was born blind from Jim McGuiggan**  
<http://www.jimmcguiggan.com/reflections3.asp?status=John&id=213>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**9:1** - "As he went along." There is no break in the dialogue from chapter eight through nine. Without the adulteress woman dialogue there is no break from chapters 7-9. The setting is still the Feast of Tabernacles.

**9:3** - "displayed" (Gk. phanerothe). *Literally, "brought to light."*

**9:4** - "do the work." What is the work of God? "To believe in the one he has sent" (John 6:29).

**9:17** - "Prophet." This is not accompanied by an article. Thus, it is not a profession of faith in Jesus, but a declaration of his uniqueness as a prophet.

**9:24** - "Give glory to God." "An idiomatic formula used in placing someone under oath to tell the truth" (NET Bible, 9:24, 74).

**9:38** - "He worshiped him." This is extremely significant because worship was to be given to God alone. Yet, Jesus does not refuse his worship as both he and the man born blind realize the fullness of who Jesus is.

## NOTES

**Strengthening Resolve** - John intentionally displays the man born blind growing in his belief of Jesus throughout the text. Initially, the man simply refers to the one who healed him as "the man they call Jesus" (9:11). Yet, as the Pharisees prod him, he moves to saying, "he is a prophet." As the dialogue continues he moves to freely describing him as a man from God (9:31-32). Yet, it is only in the personal interaction with Jesus that he comes to true belief, professing, "Lord, I believe!"

**Theme: Water** - What is the significance of Jesus telling the man to wash in the pool of Siloam? There are two answers. First, John tells us that Siloam means sent and appears to be a reference to Jesus' sending the man. Second, the setting is still the temple courts during the feast of tabernacles. One aspect of the feast of tabernacles was that the high priest would lead a procession down to the pool of Siloam and dip a golden pitcher. He would then return to the altar with a procession of praise, worship and the reading of Isaiah 12. Concerning this event the Mishnah says, "Whoever did not see the Rejoicing of the House of Drawing... never saw rejoicing in his lifetime" (*Sukkah*, 5:1). Jesus is reinterpreting the joy of the feast of tabernacles in his own miraculous working of the man born blind.

**Historicity of the Miracle** - John does something in this narrative that could slip by the reader without notice. Jesus throughout chapter seven and eight has been testifying to himself as the Son of God. John subtly continues this theme by providing a multitude of testimony to the miracle or sign of Jesus in chapter nine. The first witnesses are his "neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging" (9:8). The second witnesses are the Pharisees who put the sign on trial as well (9:13). Finally, the parents are brought in as witnesses (9:20-23). Despite disagreements over who Jesus is this one thing is historically verifiable for John: the blind man can see (9:25).

## Devotional Thoughts John 9:1-41

### Who cause this?

Although we might deny that we believe in deuteronomic theology (see note on previous page), it is still pervasive in many of our churches. For example, we might not believe that a person is blind because of their parent's sin, but what about a child that falls into drug abuse or same-sex attraction? How often do we affiliate these things with some moral failure of the parents? Likewise, we might not say that any blind person is that way because of their sin, but what about the homeless or those in chronic pain? There has to be some sinfulness that led to these issues, right? Yet, Jesus turns these thoughts upside down in our minds. This man was born blind "so that the work of God might be displayed *in his life.*" For the self-reliant, self-righteous, and self-satisfied, God has little room to work. Yet, in those who have known only darkness, the light of the world is at work! This is the irony of John 9: Jesus judges that those who claim to see are actually blinded because of their sin, but those who have been blind can see the light of the world in their freedom from sin!

How does our judgment of others keep us blind in our sin? How has the work of God been displayed through your physical ailments or issues?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 9:1-41

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 20

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### Opening Question

- Have you ever been temporarily blinded or had a serious eye ailment. What was that like?

### In the Word: Read John 9:1-41

- How does this man's blindness serve to display the work of God in his life?
- Why do you think Jesus put the mud on the man's eyes?
- Through this text, how many people serve as a witness to this miracle?
  - Why is it important to have so many witnesses?
- What role do the parents of the blind man have in this chapter?
- How do you see the blind man grow or develop in his understanding of Jesus through this text?
- What is the significance of the man worshipping Jesus in verse 38?

### In Our Walk

- Although we might deny that we believe in Deuteronomic theology (see notes), it is still pervasive in many of our churches. For example, we might not believe that a person is blind because of their parent's sin, but what about a child that falls into drug abuse or same-sex attraction? How often do we affiliate these things with some moral failure of the parents? Likewise, we might not say that any blind person is that way because of their sin, but what about the homeless or those in chronic pain? There must be some sinfulness that led to these issues, right? Yet, Jesus turns these thoughts upside down in our minds. This man was born blind "so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." For the self-reliant, self-righteous, and self-satisfied, God has little room to work. Yet, in those who have known only darkness, the light of the world is at work! This is the irony of John 9, Jesus judges that those who claim to see are blinded because of their sin, but those who have been blind can see the light of the world in their freedom from sin!
  - How does our judgment of others keep us blind in our sin?
  - How has the work of God been displayed through your physical ailments or issues?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that God will open our eyes to see him, believe in him, and worship him!



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 10:1-21}

## Notes:

### Background

**Shepherding** - Shepherding was regarded by the cultural elites, such as the Pharisees, as a trade of low social status reserved only for the poor of poor and this is in Jesus' mind as he brings this imagery forefront in his discussion with the Pharisees (9:40-41). Shepherding was a diverse trade with many styles depending on proximity to town. Based upon the text at hand, it appears that Jesus is referencing a style of shepherding in which many flocks would be gathered every night into a communal pen connected to the walls of a town for mutual security. In the morning, the gatekeeper would allow the shepherds in through the gate to call out their flock from among the other flocks. They would spend the day grazing the hillsides surrounding the town. The flocks were small enough that each shepherd would know his sheep intimately. Ken Bailey proposes that within John 10:1-30 there are four shepherd poems (1-6, 7-10, 11-18, 19-30) that follow the daily life of a shepherd from morning to night (Ken Bailey, "The Shepherd Poems of John 10: Their Culture and Style" *Irish Biblical Studies* (1993):2-17).

### For the Non-Believer

**Followers** - I have a friend who was training to run the Missoula Marathon. When the day came for the marathon, I checked Facebook hoping to see pictures of her completing it. Instead, on her page were a bunch of pictures of her running by herself captioned with "decided to run my own marathon... 26.2 #inmyownsteps #gotenoughtshirts #dontbeafollower." When I ran into her later, I asked her when she decided to run her own marathon. She said it was when she was talking to one of her running friends who had done the same thing the year before. Interestingly enough, in her desire to not be a follower, she had followed someone else. We are all followers, all like sheep following some shepherd, whether we want to be or not. The question is whether your shepherd is worth following. Jesus says he knows his sheep by name, he leads his sheep to abundant life, and he lays down his life for his sheep. Can you say the same thing about the person or lifestyle you are following in your life?

## Weekly Schedule Week 21

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

**Additional Resources:**  
**Watch this devotional video, "Lessons from a Shepherd," of a modern shepherd with his flock by Iron Kite Films on Vimeo. Note especially his call and voice.**

<https://vimeo.com/43733804>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 10:1** - *"Sheepfold."* "There was more than one type of sheepfold in use in Palestine in Jesus' day. The one here seems to be a courtyard in front of a house (the Greek word used for the sheepfold here, αὐλή [aulh] frequently refers to a courtyard), surrounded by a stone wall (often topped with briars for protection)." NET Bible, 10:1, 2.
- 10:6** - *"figure of speech"* (Gk. paroimian). In the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) Jesus speaks in parables (parabolh), but John says here and in 16:25, 29 that he was speaking in a "paroimian," which is a slightly different word but has a similar meaning of a short story with symbolic meaning.
- 10:9** - *"come in and go out"* (Gk. eiserxomai kai ezerxomai). This is an idiom that means describes how to live in a community (Acts 1:21). Thus, Jesus is probably describing our new life in the community of the church.
- 10:11, 14** - *"Good"* (Gk. kalos). Raymond Brown argues strongly that this word is better translated "model." To the Pharisees Jesus is saying he is the model shepherd.
- 10:16** - *"Other sheep not of this pen."* Most likely this refers to the Gentiles though some have argued he is referring to the Samaritans or to the diaspora Jews.

## NOTES

**Biblical Shepherding Motif** - The shepherding motif is one of the most consistent throughout the history of Israel. Most of the leading OT figures were shepherds or herdsmen: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David. Likewise, God is often referred to as the shepherd of Israel as in Psalm 23. Likewise, the prophets are full of the shepherding imagery. More specific to the context of John 10, where Jesus is in discussion with the Pharisees, he appears to be picking up the prophecy of Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 34, Ezekiel is called to prophesy against the "shepherds of Israel" a role which in Jesus' time was held by the Pharisees. Ezekiel continues to say that because these shepherds have not watched over the flocked and have only cared for themselves, God himself will come as the shepherd of Israel. Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Ezekiel 34 as he declares in John 10.

**Sheep** - Eating meat was reserved for only the wealthiest one percent of the population in the ancient world. Sheep were sometimes butchered, but more often they were raised for their wool and milk. Their hide would also be used mainly for water vessels.

**Life to the Full** - Jesus says, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (10:10). The word for fullness, *perisson*, means in abundance, overflowing, or superfluous. It is an odd word choice here as most of its uses in the NT do not have a similar connotation (Matt. 5:37, 47; Rom 3:1; 2 Cor. 9:1). Jesus appears to be saying the life he offers is beyond the normal.

## Devotional Thoughts John 10:1-21

### Know His Voice

When I go to pick up my son from the babysitter at the end of the day, I always say, "HELLO!!!" when I walk in the door. Before he can see me, I can hear him giggle and start crawling my direction because he knows my voice. Maybe you have a story similar to that in your life. Jesus says that the sheep "know his voice" and that even those who aren't his sheep will "listen to my voice." Ancient shepherds called their sheep by voice and based upon the continued protection and guidance of the shepherd, the sheep grew in their trust and recognition of that voice. As the sheep or children of God, we should recognize the voice of the Lord. In your life, how have you grown to listen, hear, and recognize the voice of the Lord? Jesus continues to say that those who recognize his voice will follow him. What is the connection between recognizing the voice of the Lord and following him? In what ways in your life has Jesus called you to follow him? How has God's protection and guidance over you and your flock helped you grow in trusting and recognizing his voice?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 10:1-21

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 21

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### Opening Question

- If you could be any animal, what would it be and why?

### In the Word: Read John 10:1-21

- What is the context of this teaching by Jesus? Where is he? Who is he talking to? Etc.
- According to this text, what different qualities does Jesus ascribe to himself as a shepherd?
  - How do these qualities contrast the qualities the Pharisees demonstrate?
- What do you think it meant to Jesus' original audience when he said in verse 10, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full?"

### In Our Walk

- Jesus says that the sheep "know his voice" and that even those who aren't his sheep will "listen to my voice." In your life, how have you grown to listen, hear, and recognize the voice of the Lord?
  - What things in your life have kept you from recognizing the voice of the Lord?
  - Jesus says they will come in and go out and find pasture. How have you experienced this as you've followed Jesus?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- Read Ezekiel 34:1-16.
  - What relationship do you see between Jesus' teaching in John 10:1-21 and this prophecy?
  - How does Jesus fulfill the prophecy of Ezekiel 34?
  - How do you see Ezekiel playing out within the larger context of John 7-10?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can allow the truth of Jesus to define God for us and liberate us from our sinfulness.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 10:22-42}

## Notes:

### Background

**Blasphemy** - Once again the Jews attempt to stone Jesus based upon the charge of blasphemy for saying "I and the Father are one" (10:30). Blasphemy was the most serious allegation the Jewish people could make against a person. The Jewish people at the time of Jesus held to a rigorous monotheism (belief in one god) that had strengthened during the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. The prophets had taught them that the reason for their captivity and exile from the promised land was because they had turned towards other deities as God. Thus, for a people trying to once again take full control of the promised land from the Romans, there was a deliberate focus on keeping the Shema. The Shema, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the Lord is one" was repeated collectively in every synagogue service. In claiming to be one with God, the Jews believed Jesus to be intentionally speaking against the Shema and blaspheming. Throughout the Gospel of John there is an increasing charge of blasphemy rising against Jesus as displayed in each stoning narrative (John 5:18; 8:58-59; 10:30-33).

### For the Non-Believer

**The Works of the Lord** - Jesus makes some rather outlandish claims about himself throughout the Gospel of John. For example, he says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry" (6:35) and "I am the way, the truth, and the life... No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Yet, when Jesus is charged with blasphemy (claiming to be God) in the passage for this week, he doesn't debate from logic or try to convince them by tricky wording. Instead, he simply asks them which of the good works they are stoning him for. The crowd is baffled. Sometimes in our faith journey we try too hard to rationalize Jesus or debate ourselves into belief. Jesus simply says to look at the works of God he has done. Jesus doesn't use his works for fame, money, power, or status. Instead, he does things for those who need it the most with only one expectation in return: that they believe he is who he claims to be. Is that how most people would use this power? What does this say about who Jesus is?

## Weekly Schedule Week 22

### Thursday-Saturday

Read and Pray the text.  
Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

Work through the provided notes.

### Monday-Tuesday

Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.

### Wednesday

At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.

### Additional Resources:

Watch this brief introduction to the history and origins of Hanukkah or the Feast of Dedication on the History Channel.

<http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/hanukkah>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 10:22** - "winter." The feast begins on 25 Kislev which is the modern equivalent of November-December.
- 10:24** - "How long will you keep us in suspense." "How long will you take away our life?" (an idiom which meant to keep one from coming to a conclusion about something). The use of the phrase τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν αἴρεις (thn yuchn Jhmwn airei") meaning 'to keep in suspense' is not well attested, although it certainly fits the context here. In modern Greek the phrase means 'to annoy, bother.'" (NET Bible, 62).
- 10:25** - "miracles" (Gk. erga). Literally, "works." Miracles is a needless translation by the NIV. Also in v.32, 38.
- 10:30** - "are one" (Gk. en esmen). This phrase does not have a gender orientation but is neuter. Thus, the connotation is not the father and I are one (person) but the father and I are one (thing).
- 10:34** - "I said, you are gods." Jesus is quoting here from Psalm 82:6 and although the Psalms were not technically considered law they were referred to alongside the law many times. The "gods" in this psalm refers to the judges of Israel. Jesus is saying that if the judges were called gods in scripture then how much more might he be referred to as the son of God.

## NOTES

**Feast of Dedication** - Better known as *Hannukkah*, this seven-day celebration came closely after the Feast of Tabernacles. "A celebration in remembrance of the restoration of the Jerusalem temple and the consecration of its new altar in 165 or 164 B.C.E under Judas Maccabeus (1 Macc. 4:36-61)... the initial celebration included the offering of sacrifices, music, and the adornment of the front of the temple and the chambers of the priests" (Carrigan, "Feast of Dedication," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 335).

**Solomon's Portico** - "On the southern end of the massive outer court of the temple lay the royal portico; the eastern colonnade was called Solomon's Portico. People believed that the eastern colonnade's pre-Herodian masonry derived from the time of Solomon, hence the title 'Solomon's porch'" (Keener, 823). The portico would have provided shelter from the cold winter days in Jerusalem as well as the hot summer sun. Likewise, the portico was a common place for Greek and Roman philosophers to perform public lectures and teaching. Even from Galilee, few Jews traveled to Jerusalem for the winter festival due to the cold winter rains that made many roads nearly impassible. That Jesus is walking in the portico during the Feast of Dedication points towards the historical authenticity of the text. It also helps establish the scene in which many of the Galilean Jews are not present. Instead, Jesus is in more specific dialogue with Jerusalem Jews and, specifically, the leading Jewish authorities who might have been more prone to stone him.

## Devotional Thoughts John 10:22-42

### Missing the Kingdom

In some circles of Judaism, there was a belief during the time of Jesus that if every Jew would keep the Sabbath perfectly just one time it would initiate the Kingdom of God. Likewise, in this passage the Jews believe whole heartedly that if they can just more perfectly keep the Shema God will send his Messiah. This is the irony of the passage: in their attempt to please God into sending the Messiah by stoning the blasphemous Jesus, they actually can't recognize that Jesus is Messiah right in front of them. They are trying so hard to please God that they miss the kingdom of God. This irony is at work in our churches still today. Too many Christians work diligently and whole-heartedly to please God into returning Jesus through rigorous legalism. In doing so, they miss the abundance and joy of the already initiated kingdom of God. How have you struggled to recognize the kingdom of God already present?

How often does our lack of joy detract people from coming to know the Messiah?

Jesus tells the people to believe in the works he has done for they are the same works that the Father does. In your life, how has the works of the Father initiated or strengthened your belief in Jesus as Messiah?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 10:22-42

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 22

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### **This week is different!**

This week will be a “works” week based upon the text and reading for this week. We are going to encourage each group to do some work on behalf of the Good News of Jesus. In the text for this week, Jesus continually says not to believe just based on what he says but on the “works” that he is doing. Likewise, Jesus’ brother James says in James 2:17 that faith (belief) without works is dead.

One of the main ways we as Christians encourage belief in one another and provoke belief in unbelievers is by doing good works on behalf of the good news of Jesus.

*This doesn't have to be a huge work!*

Some ideas:

- Help a needy neighbor do some spring cleaning.
- Bake cookies for everyone to share with their neighbors.
- Put together care packages for our sick members or our military.
- Clean a roadside.
- Host the whole neighborhood for a BBQ.
- Put together thank you packages for our local law enforcement, EMT's and firefighters.

### **Closing Prayer**

- Pray that the truth of Jesus will be made known through our work.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 11:1-27}

## Notes:

### Background

**Judea** - Jesus is hesitant to return to Judea because of the recent threats to his life that had occurred there (10:31, 39; 11:8). His disciples show resistance when he decides to head toward Judea (11:8) and sarcasm when he finally departs (11:16). Yet, Jesus reminds them of standard rabbinic teaching that one who walks in the light will not stumble (11:9). Jesus means that though they may feel threatened, their motive will protect them. “The home of Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, was in Bethany about 2 miles from Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives... Excavations carried out by the Franciscans at Bethany have uncovered the remains of Christian churches dating back to the fourth century A.D. Of particular interest is the tomb of Lazarus. Eusebius remarked that Lazarus’ tomb was a pilgrimage site during his day, and the presumed site remains so today” (Archeological Study Bible, 1743).

**Signs** - John has been leading up to this final sign through his entire account of the Gospel. This sign is the lengthiest in John. Through the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus will sign his death warrant (11:53-54) and his hour will now be at hand (12:7, 23). It is no surprise that Jesus’ first sign in John is a wedding and his final sign is a funeral as this was common in ancient literature to symbolize fullness of life. Likewise, John depicts Jesus here in relationship to Moses. “Whereas Moses’ first sign was transforming water to blood, Jesus benevolently transforms it into wine. Likewise, whereas the final plague against Egypt was the death of the firstborn sons, the climax of Jesus’ signs is raising a dead brother-provider” (Keener, 835).

### For the Non-Believer

**The Resurrection** - Your belief in the afterlife should determine the way you live in the present. Yet for most people, the way they live in the present determines what they think about the afterlife. Be honest with yourself for just a minute and ask these questions: What do I think happens after I die? How did I come to that conclusion? Does my view of the afterlife determine my present or is it vice versa?

## Weekly Schedule Week 23

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Gather the kids (or grandkids) together and watch this fun introduction to Mary and Martha by Crossroads Kids Club called “God’s Story: Mary and Martha.”**  
<https://vimeo.com/75409317>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 11:4** - “end in death” (Gk. *pros thanaton*). Literally, “for death.” John’s contrast is clear in the original language. Lazarus isn’t sick for death but for the glory of God (11:4).
- 11:5** - “Jesus loved...” This parenthetical statement by the author is intended to show Jesus’ genuine concern for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus despite the fact that he waits to go to Judea.
- 11:9** - “this world’s light” (Gk. *phws tou kosmou*). Literally, “light of the world.” Jesus uses this exact phrase in his commentary on the healing of the blind man in 8:12.
- 11:11** - “asleep” (Gk. *koimaw*). This word “is often used in the Bible as a euphemism for death when speaking of believers. This metaphorical usage by its very nature emphasizes the hope of resurrection: Believers will one day “wake up” out of death. Here the term refers to death, but “asleep” was used in the translation to emphasize the metaphorical, rhetorical usage of the term, especially in light of the disciples’ confusion over what Jesus actually meant (see v. 13)” (NET Bible, 11:11, 22).

## Background

**Shiva** - This is the customary Jewish tradition of six days of mourning after the day of burial (the day of the death). In Palestinian tradition, the immediate family would stay in the home while friends and relatives came with food and to express sympathy. By the time Jesus arrived on the fourth day, many people had already come and visited. Since Jesus had been specifically invited, his late arrival was socially offensive though John specifically points out that it is not a reflection of Jesus’ love for Lazarus, Martha, or Mary (11:5). Still, Mary and Martha’s questioning of Jesus demonstrates their honest anger without breaking social mores.

**Two Days** - Jesus waits two full days before he heads back to Judea (11:6). “Upon his arrival, he finds that Lazarus has already been in the tomb for four days, one day past the period of three days after which the Jews believed that a deceased person’s spirit left his body. If Jesus had not delayed his coming, he would have arrived only two days after Lazarus’s death; perhaps there would still have been time to work a miracle. But now it was too late, even for Jesus (or so it was thought). This, of course, only challenged people’s faith (vv. 15, 25) while checking popular superstition (cf. 5:7); for as John makes clear throughout his Gospel, Jesus specializes in ‘hard’ miracles, the present being the ‘hardest’ of all” (Kostenberger, 131).

**Mary and Martha** - It appears from this text that John expects the audience to already have previous knowledge of Mary and Martha. He affiliates Bethany as their hometown (11:1), offers a reference point for Mary that has yet to occur in the Gospel (11:2), and the sisters display the same opposing characteristics as they display in Luke (John 11:20; Luke 10:38-42).

## Devotional Thoughts John 11:1-27

### I am the Resurrection

If read with the correct drama in mind, Jesus’ statement, “I am the resurrection and the life” may be the most climactic moment in the entire narrative. Confronted with her dear brother’s death, Martha declares her hope in the resurrection at the final day despite her overwhelming sadness. In a world of crushing disappointment and heartbreak, the hope of a victorious resurrection often gave impoverished and enslaved Jews a glimmer of anticipation. This dynamic is portrayed in Isaiah 26:18-19:

*We were with child, we writhed in labor,  
but we gave birth to wind.*

*We have not brought salvation to the  
earth,*

*and the people of the world have not  
come to life.*

*But your dead will live, Lord;  
their bodies will rise—*

*let those who dwell in the dust  
wake up and shout for joy—*

*your dew is like the dew of the morning;  
**the earth will give birth to her dead.***

As Martha declares her hope in this resurrection one can picture her tear filled, bloodshot eyes lifting towards Jesus. In a soft, strong voice he intimately and cosmologically declares, “I am the resurrection...”

**In other words, the entire hope of Jewish expectation and the world as a whole is found in Jesus! In the poignant human pain of a funeral, Jesus is the resurrection!**

How does that change your life!?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 11:1-27

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 23

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### Opening Question

- When have people helped comfort you in mourning?

### In the Word: Read John 11:1-27

- Why are Jesus and his disciples hesitant to return to Judea?
  - What does his statement in verses 9-10 have to do with returning to Judea?
- If Jesus loves Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, why does he wait two days to leave for Judea?
  - Do you think John expects his audience to have some previous knowledge of who Mary and Martha are? Why or why not?
- What significance is there that the first sign Jesus performs is at a wedding changing water to wine and the last sign he performs is at a funeral bringing the dead back to life?

### In Our Walk

- How would Martha have understood Jesus saying, “I am the resurrection and the life?”
  - How do we understand it now after reading this passage and thinking about the resurrection?

### For our Non-Believing Friends

- Does how you view what happens after you die affect how you should live today? Why or why not?
  - How do we have authentic discussions about what happens after you die without harassing people?
  - What approach to genuine dialogue about what happens after you die has worked for you with non-believers?
  - Should we start a discussion with a non-believer about Jesus with what happens after you die?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray for the resurrection and that all our friends who do not know Jesus as the Messiah can come to know him.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 11:28-44}

## Notes:

### Background

**Deeply Moved** - John says in 11:33 that Jesus was “deeply moved in spirit” and in 11:38 that he was “once more deeply moved.” The word translated here as deeply moved is *embrimaomai* in Greek. This is an unusual word to use in this situation as it means to feel deep anger or irritation to the point of physical activity. For example, in Mark 14 when a woman anoints Jesus feet with expensive perfume the disciples scold her for doing so. The word for scold is the same used here to describe Jesus’ internal feeling. Jesus was scolded or angered to action within himself. Who is Jesus angry with? Scholars have debated whether it is Mary and Martha for their unbelief, the Jews for their unbelief, or even just at death as a whole. The context is important. Jesus feels this deep anger emotion in response to seeing the mourning of Mary in v. 31 and it is this same emotion that causes him to act in v. 38. John is clearly describing the humanness of Jesus in this narrative (11:35) and it is this humanness that initiates his raising of Lazarus through divine petition (11:41-42).

**Burial Clothes** - John intentionally notes that Lazarus was still in his full burial cloth as he came out of the tomb (11:44). In ancient custom, the burial clothes were wrapped so tight around the body that it would have been physically impossible to move in this situation. Thus, the miracle is even more significant as he walks out still in the burial clothes. Symbolically, they serve as a specific sign that death still has a hold on Lazarus. Though Lazarus has been raised from the dead, he remains bound in the burial clothes. In contrast to Lazarus is the resurrection of Jesus. In this scene, the clothes are neatly folded and set aside (20:5, 7) symbolizing that the chaos of death has been defeated under the control of God. No longer will the burial clothes shackle humanity.

### For the Non-Believer

**For Real?!** - Did Jesus really raise Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead for four days?

## Weekly Schedule Week 24

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Listen to the sermon and read the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**If you have time read this extensive scholarly article by Craig A. Evans entitled, “Jewish Burial Traditions and the Resurrection of Jesus. Available at:**

**[http://craigaevans.com/Burial\\_Traditions.pdf](http://craigaevans.com/Burial_Traditions.pdf)**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**11:34** - "Come and see." This provocative statement by the crowd toward Jesus is the same phrase used by Philip when he calls his brother Nathanael to meet Jesus (1:46). In the same way it is the invitation of Jesus to two of John's disciples who ask where Jesus is dwelling.

**11:35** - "Jesus wept" (Gk. *edakrusen*). This is not the word for loud wailing and mourning though this would have been appropriate in Jewish custom at the grave. Instead, it literally means "shed tears," and refers to a more subdued private crying.

**11:41** - "looked up" (Gk. *tous ephthalmous avw*). Literally, "lifted his eyes above." This was the standard position for public prayer.

**11:11** - "take off the grave clothes" (Gk. *lusate*). Literally, "loose him."

## Background

**The Stench** - When Jesus orders the stone to be taken away, Martha warns him that the stench will be unbearable. It was customary in some ancient cultures to embalm the dead, but in Jewish culture this was not allowed. Because the decomposed remains would often be moved a year later, the Jewish tradition was to encourage quicker decomposition. Though the traditional spices would cover the smell temporarily, by the fourth day the smell would have been intense.

**Mary and Martha** - Mary and Martha are core characters in this narrative. Jesus loves them (11:5) and John uses their interaction with Jesus intentionally. Does John intentionally contrast Mary and Martha in the way that Luke does in Luke 10? Possibly. In Luke, Martha is doing the proper work of the household while Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet. In John, Martha leaves the house to properly greet her Rabbi while Mary remains in the house mourning in her emotion until Jesus calls for her. In Luke Jesus enters into a dialogue with Martha while Mary is portrayed only as sitting at Jesus' feet. In John, both sisters make the same statement to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21; 32). Martha then enters into a dialogue with Jesus about the resurrection while Mary does not speak again. Although there is contrast, maybe John it is not intending to show which way is right or wrong, but to demonstrate both dimensions of the human experience. By asking the same question both sisters find Jesus at the same point but then demonstrate differing qualities of humanness between the cognitive and emotive. Thus, Jesus' differs in his interaction with them.

## Motif

**Believe and See** - Throughout the Gospel of John there is a returning correlation between seeing and believing. In most of the narrative seeing leads to belief (John 1:48-50; 2:11; 4:48; 6:30, 40; 7:31; 10:38). Yet, in his dialogue with Martha, Jesus switches this motif and says that if you believe you will see. John will finalize this motif in John 20:29.

## Devotional Thoughts John 11:28-44

### Come and See

It is easy to read this narrative through the lens of Mary, Martha, or even Jesus, but what if we read this narrative through the lens of Lazarus. Lazarus is laboring in the sickness that will lead to his death. Though his sister sent word to Jesus, he does not come despite his love for Lazarus. What are those fleeting final moments of Lazarus life like? Does he stare through the bouncing eyes of every labored breath at the door waiting, wishing, hoping for the Messiah? For his friend? Does the darkness that finally overtakes linger long like pain or is it as fleeting as a good night's sleep?

Is he scared when he suddenly awakes? Is it a hard painful cough or a long deep breath? What is it like to try and sit up in burial clothes pulled so tight they cut into every orifice? Or has the power of God released even this pain?

Does he stumble in the dark of the tomb blinded by the cloth on his face till he finds the gap and stumbles out? Or does the echoing voice of the Messiah that he longed to hear upon his death bed give him immediate direction and intimate hope?

*Am I myself anything more than a tightly wrapped corpse in the darkness of death longing for the voice of the Messiah to give me hope and new life?*





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 11:28-44

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 24

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### Opening Question

- Who is someone you are close to that has passed away? How did you deal with it?

### In the Word: Read John 11:28-44

- Compare and contrast the way Jesus interacts with Mary and with Martha.
  - What sticks out to you about the differences?
  - What sticks out to you about the similarities?
  - Why do you think both women make the same statement to Jesus, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died (11:21, 32)?”
- The word for Jesus’ emotion in this text that is often translated “deeply moved” is better translated as angry or irritation to the point of activity. Why would Jesus be angry or irritated to the point of action in this text?
- Why does Jesus weep even though he knows that God is going to raise Lazarus?
- Why does John point out the condition of the burial clothes around Lazarus?

### In Our Walk

- It is easy to read this narrative through the lens of Mary, Martha, or even Jesus, but what if we read this narrative through the lens of Lazarus. Lazarus is laboring in the sickness that will lead to his death. Though his sister sent word to Jesus, he does not come despite his love for Lazarus.
- What are those fleeting final moments of Lazarus’ life like?
  - What do you think he feels physically and emotionally when he suddenly wakes up?
  - What is it like to try and sit up in burial clothes pulled so tight they cut into every orifice?
  - Do you think he recognizes Jesus voice or does he stumble in the dark of the tomb blinded by the cloth on his face till he finds the gap and stumbles out?
  - In what ways in our life are we just like Lazarus?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- Throughout the Gospel of John there is a returning correlation between seeing and believing. Read the following passages from John: 1:48-50; 2:11; 4:48; 6:30, 40; 7:31; 10:38.
  - What is the correlation between seeing and believing in these texts?
  - How does this correlation change in John 11:38-40?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray for the resurrection and that all our friends who do not know Jesus as the Messiah can come to know him.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 11:45-57}

## Notes:

### Background

**The Sanhedrin and Caiaphas' Prophecy** - According to Josephus (Jewish Historian ca. 37-100 AD) Caiaphas was the High Priest over the Jewish temple in Jerusalem from 18-36 AD. Besides in John (11:49,51; 18:13, 14, 24, 28), he is also mentioned by name in both Luke (3:2; Acts 4:6) and Matthew (26:3, 57). Caiaphas was a Sadducee (Hellenized Jew) whose political savvy often helped keep the Jews in fair standing with the Roman government. His father in law, Annas, had served as High Priest before him. An ossuary was discovered possibly containing his bones in 1991.

It is notable that in this significant meeting of the priests and Pharisees only Caiaphas specific words are recalled. Josephus referred to him as often abrupt and rude. Though the Pharisees and Sadducees were both Jews, they were political divided. Pharisees were more stringent in following the Law and were more urgent to overthrow the Roman government. Yet, Sadducees were in political control. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish Supreme court comprised of seventy-one members including the high priest. Though most members were Sadducees, the Pharisees held a strongly influential minority. According to John, Caiaphas had prophesied that Jesus would die to reclaim the Jewish nation and bring them together as one. In consistent biblical pattern (think Isaiah or Jeremiah), Caiaphas did not understand the fullness of what he was prophesying nor did the rest of the Sanhedrin. Most likely, they understood the scattered (v.52) to be the diaspora Jews who had been displaced from Israel by different exiles over the previous five hundred years. Likewise, he understood Jesus' death as a necessary evil by which to keep the peace with Rome. This was and continues to be a standard philosophical question; should one man die for the good of the community?

Caiaphas supreme statement was the clear verdict that Jesus should die. It served as the final death warrant for Jesus as John clarifies with his statement, "So from that day on they plotted to take his life." Not only did the Sanhedrin wish for Jesus to die, but they were now actively planning this death, which had to not only kill him but shame him publicly as well.

## Weekly Schedule Week 25

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch this short resource video on the origin and influence of the Sanhedrin during the time of Jesus:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwoWhjGk1v8>

**If the link doesn't work, search Youtube for What is Sanhedrin?**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**11:47** - “meeting of the Sanhedrin.” This word can refer to the formal Sanhedrin meeting or a more informal period of counsel and debate. The latter is most likely here.

**11:47** - “accomplishing... performing” (Gk. *poiew*). The same root verb (to do) is used here for both the Jew’s and Jesus’ activity. They ask what are we *doing* in response to all the signs Jesus is *doing*.

**11:50** - “people/nation” (Gk. *laos/ethnos*). In this sentence, Caiaphas uses both words to refer to the people of God as was a common Biblical practice.

## For the Non-Believer

**The One for the Many** - The Sanhedrin asks this age old question still debated to this day. Is it appropriate for the government or ruling body to kill a person on behalf of the good of the community? What do you think? The divine irony that God gives as an answer to this question in the person of Jesus is earth shattering and philosophically invigorating. In Jesus, God’s answer is “I am *willing* to die for the sake of the community.” Rather, than squabble in the philosophy of men, God answers through self-sacrifice.

## NOTES

**Johannine Irony** - John uses the great literary technique of irony to share his account of the good news of Jesus. Among smaller occurrences, John has used this technique in the wine from the ceremonial jars being the “best” wine (2:10) and in the healing of the blind man and his interaction with the Pharisees who cannot see (John 5:40). Now, John utilizes irony again in the narrative of the raising of Lazarus in four ways. First, the Sanhedrin sets out to kill Jesus because Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Second, Caiaphas understands his prophecy that Jesus must die for the people as a reason to kill Jesus. The irony is that in killing Jesus, Jesus will actually become the living savior of Israel. Third, in his prophecy Caiaphas expected the death of Jesus to help allow the scattered people of Israel to be allowed back by the Roman. Yet, Jesus death actually served to bring *all* scattered people (regardless of ethnicity) into the nation of Israel. Finally, from a divine perspective, the Sanhedrin seeks to kill Jesus to protect Israel from the Roman government, but in killing Jesus they set in motion the divine action that will lead to the destruction of Jerusalem.

## Motif

**Believe and See** - Throughout the Gospel of John there is a recurring correlation between seeing and believing. Throughout the Gospel narrative, seeing leads to belief (John 1:48-50; 2:11; 4:48; 6:30, 40; 7:31; 10:38). John returns to this theme in the final sign of the raising of Lazarus as many grieving Jews who had been with Mary once again see what Jesus has done and believe in him (11:45).

## Devotional Thoughts John 11:45-57

### Who would I be?

In the second chapter of Acts, in response to Peter’s powerful sermon on the resurrection of Jesus, the people are cut to their heart because they recognize the role they specifically played in killing the chosen one of God. Often when we read the Gospels, we think we would have been a devoted disciple of Jesus following him all the way to the cross. Yet, in the Gospels we see a countless number of people who reject Jesus, follow him half-heartedly, or can’t recognize who he really is. In the text for this week we see people who even plot to kill him for a seemingly good reason. Based upon your reading of John so far and real introspection, who do you see yourself most like in the Gospel of John?

### Mission Oriented

It is intriguing that both Jesus and the Sanhedrin have the same mission in this final section of John eleven. This mission is the death of Jesus. Also interesting is that both parties believe that their mission is from God. Caiaphas says this much in 11:49-50 and Jesus has made it increasingly clear throughout John’s account. Of course, in the resurrection, we recognize that Jesus had the true mission. What does this teach us about our mission in relationship to God’s overarching mission? Are we like the Sanhedrin sometimes?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 11:45-57

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 25

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### Opening Question

- When was a time you have thought there was the possibility you might die? What was that experience like for you?

### In the Word: Read John 11:45-57

- Why do the religious leaders set out to kill Jesus?
- In verses 49-52, Caiaphas speaks concerning a prophecy he has had against Jesus. What does *Caiaphas* understand this prophecy to mean?
  - How does that contrast with what the prophecy actually meant?
- What different ironies do you see in this text?

### In Our Walk

- At the beginning of John 11, Jesus essentially signs his own death warrant. What provokes Jesus to sign his own death warrant?
  - What would provoke you to sign your own death warrant? Who would you die for?
- As we've reached about the half way point in the Gospel of John, what character in John do you see yourself most like? Why?

### In Greater Depth

- It is intriguing that both Jesus and the Sanhedrin have the same mission in this final section of John 11. This mission is the death of Jesus. Also interesting is that both parties believe that their mission is from God. Caiaphas says this much in 11:49-50 and Jesus has made it increasingly clear throughout John's account. Of course, in the resurrection, we recognize that Jesus had the true mission. What does this teach us about our mission in relationship to God's overarching mission?
  - Are we like the Sanhedrin sometimes?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray for hearts that seek to be self-sacrificial in our love for God and others.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 12:1-19}

## Notes:

### Background

**Anoint with Oil** - There were four main reasons people in the ancient world anointed with oil. First, in their most basic form, oils, nard, and perfume served hygienically to cleanse the body before the invention of modern soap. Second, ancient people understood the power of odor as connected with memory and pleasure. John recalls fondly the smell of the expensive perfuming filling the house. Third, before the invention of modern medicine, oils, perfumes, and nard served medicinally for healing. Fourth, across nearly every ancient culture oils were used for sacred anointing and embalming the dead.

**Anointing in the Bible** - Throughout the Old Testament, anointing served a special purpose of setting aside an individual for a divine role or task. In Exodus 30:22-36, Moses describes the specific way that the priests, tent of meeting, and everything in the tent was to be made holy through the anointing oil. The oil itself is regarded as holy to God in this text. Likewise, when a king was chosen by God it was through anointing such as in both the case of Saul (1 Samuel 9-10) and David (1 Samuel 16). It should also be noted that the term Christ or Messiah literally means “anointed one.” Thus, in typical John fashion, Martha professes Jesus as the “anointed one” in John 11:27 and Mary makes the same proclamation without speaking through her anointing of Jesus in John 12:1-9.

### For the Non-Believer

**Who would you anoint?** - In this text, Mary, a dear friend of Jesus, falls on the ground before Jesus. She then pours out one of her most expensive possessions, valuable perfume, to wash his feet. She does this because she believes he is worthy of this honor. He has brought back her brother, Lazarus, from the dead and has promised her eternal life. To her that is enough to honor him by pouring out her expensive possession over his stinky feet. What would Jesus have to do for you in your life to honor him by handing over one of your most valued possessions to his honor?

## Weekly Schedule Week 26

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch the quick video by Jaye Martin on Mary's anointing of Jesus.**

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/video/what-do-we-learn-from-mary-anointing-the-feet-of-jesus-in-john-12.html>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**12:3** - "A pint" (*Gk. litra*). From which we get the word liter. It is the Roman pound equivalent to 11.5oz.

**12:3** - "pure nard" (*Gk. murou nardou pistikes*). Nardou is nard. Murou often means made from myrrh but here it probably refers to being scented or as a perfume. Finally, pistikes is a difficult word to translate and is thought to either mean pure or that the entire phrase nardou pistikes is a specific brand of expensive nard.

**12:6** - "He did not..." Throughout the Gospel of John, Judas is consistently portrayed as a bad character, which will lead to his demise.

**12:10** - "Planned to kill Lazarus as well." In typical Johannine irony, the chief priests' plan to kill Lazarus whom Jesus brought back to life.

## Background.

**Triumphal Entry** - Many pilgrims would have been arriving for the great Jerusalem Passover feast. The streets would have been teeming with the bustling noise of an energetic crowd. As Jesus enters, he is welcomed as king. This has led many to ask why the Romans did not immediately arrest him. Keener responds, "Most of the accounts do not require us to suppose an originally large-scale notice. In the bustle of a city milling with pilgrims, more of whom were arriving throughout the day, the Romans need not have noticed this relatively obscure event. The Roman garrison was concentrated on the Temple Mount, and Jesus was hardly the only Passover pilgrim welcomed by the crowds already present. More importantly, leaders of the municipal aristocracy, normally charged with keeping peace for the Romans, were also concentrated on the Temple Mount at this season (being mainly priest) and had they been notified of the entry in time to stop it... they preferred not to act in front of the crowd anyway" (867).

**Prophetic Fulfillment** - Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus is portrayed as the fulfillment of the prophetic anticipation. Everyone has been wondering if Jesus would come to Jerusalem for the Passover. As he arrives, he is met in the street by the laying of palm branches and shouts of messianic expectation. He finds a young donkey to ride, which is unexpectedly embarrassing. Definitely not becoming of a king. Imagine the disciples' mortification that Jesus would choose this lowly creature to ride on. It is only in hindsight they recognize Jesus is fulfilling the hope of Zechariah 9:9, "Your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey!" More than that, John has displayed Jesus as the fulfillment of all of Zechariah nine. Zechariah continues, "He will proclaim peace to the nations... As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit! ... The Lord their God will save his people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock. How attractive they will be! Grain will make the young men thrive, and new wine the young women."

## Devotional Thoughts John 12:1-19

### On a Donkey's Colt

The Cleveland Cavaliers just came from a 3-1 series deficit to win an NBA title, fulfilling LeBron James' promise to bring Cleveland a championship that he made nearly two years ago when he returned to play for his hometown team. Tomorrow, the team will be paraded through the packed streets of Cleveland as the crowds' roar and applaud their victorious warriors. It is customary for the victors to ride in elaborate open air buses plastered with their logos and pictures from the series. One can almost already imagine James with his throne on the back of such a bus as the chants of "MVP" and "The King" lift from the streets. It will surely be something to behold.

In stark contrast is Jesus being welcomed into Jerusalem. Though James can dunk a basketball, Jesus brings a man back from the dead. The crowds shout "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel!" Yet, Jesus seeks no throne or self-glorifying charter bus. While the crowds long for him to be the king they expected, the king they think they deserve, Jesus finds the colt of a donkey. The crowds lay down palm branches while Jesus sits on his... foal.

Why does Jesus do this? Besides prophetic fulfillment, what is the message Jesus wants the crowds to see?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 12:1-19

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 26

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### Opening Question

- Two Questions: Answer them both please as this should take up a significant portion of time.
  - What is the biggest celebration you have ever been a part of?
  - What is the most intimate moment of your life?

### In the Word: Read John 12:1-9

- Compare and contrast Mary anointing Jesus' feet with the triumphal entry.
- Is Judas' objection legitimate even if he was corrupt? Why or why not?
  - Why does Jesus allow Mary to perform this anointing?
  - What is the biblical symbolism of this event?
- What is so significant about Jesus riding in on the colt of a donkey?

### In Our Walk

- Mary pours out the perfumed nard on the feet of Jesus. This was worth a year's wages as Judas points out. What do you own that costs a year of your wages?
  - Would you give this up at the feet of Jesus?
  - What things do we worship more than Jesus?
  - Why is it so hard for us to be self-sacrificial like Mary in this circumstance?

### In Greater Depth

- It is only after Jesus is glorified that the disciples understand Jesus is fulfilling Zechariah 9:9 by riding in on a donkey. Read through the rest of Zechariah chapter nine. What other roles from this text has Jesus fulfilled in the Gospel of John?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray for hearts that seek to be self-sacrificial in our love for God and others.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 12:20-36}

## Notes:

### Background

**Greeks** - Though some scholars have argued that the Greeks here are in fact Diaspora Jews (Jews who did not belong to Judea proper), it is much more likely that John is describing Gentile Greeks. It was common for either God-fearing Greeks (Gentiles who professed faith in the Jewish God) or Gentile Greeks to attend the great Jewish festivals in Jerusalem much like tourists still do today. The rumor of the resurrection of Lazarus has spread so far that even Greeks are coming to meet the one who supposedly performed the miracle. It is unclear whether the Greeks receive audience with Jesus though they may be those among the crowd when the voice from heaven speaks (12:28). In typical Johannine drama, it is the Gentiles, the outsiders of Judaism, that usher in the arrival of Jesus' hour of Glory.

### Motif

**Light and Dark** - "The imagery of light and darkness in the Gospel is not used to describe a perennial conflict between light and darkness. Rather, it is inspired by the prophetic picture of a messianic light with its overtones of eschatological novelty. The picture is of a world in darkness whose situation is changed when light comes into it, floods it with light, and require people either to live in it and walk by it, or to stay in darkness" (Baukham, 127).

### For the Non-Believer

**Where are you going?** - I recently moved into a new house and late one night awoke to an unfamiliar sound. I went to check it out but didn't know where the light switches were and found myself suddenly tripping over a box and falling head first into a wall! Sometimes our life can feel like we are just wandering around in the dark hoping we don't trip over something. Jesus speaks to this in John 12:35-36. He says a person who walks in darkness doesn't know where they are going. That just makes sense, but then he says something unexpected. He says that he is in fact the light. If you feel like your life is just stumbling in the dark hoping you don't hit your head too badly, might Jesus be the light that exposes the reality of the world around you?

## Weekly Schedule Week 27

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Through your free Right Now Media account provided by the church, watch Ravi Zacharias speak on “Is there Meaning in Evil and Suffering.”**

**<https://www.rightnow.org/Content/Series/167912#1>**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 12:21** - "Philip." It is unclear why they approached Philip. Possibly it is because he had a Greek name.
- 12:28** - "from heaven" (*Gk. tou ouranou*). This word can be translated heaven or sky. The idea is that it came from above.
- 12:32** - "all men." The text does not include men or people in the original but the word for all implies such a usage.
- 12:34** - "the Christ" (*Gk. xristos*). Christ was the title but it might be better translated as Messiah or even, in the present context, the anointed one based upon the previous narrative when Mary anoints his feet.

## Theme

**Glory** - As his "hour" has now come, so the Son of Man will now be glorified. Richard Baukham (*Gospel of Glory, 43-62.*) has done an excellent job of tracing the theme of glory throughout the Gospel of John. He demonstrates that the New Testament intentionally adopts and modifies the Greek term "doxa" (glory) to translate the Hebrew term "kabod." This term can mean two things: honor or visible splendor. Baukham notes that for most of the NT it means one or the other, depending on usage, but John intentionally uses this phrase more than any other NT writer to hold both meanings simultaneously. This can only happen because the audible "word" has taken on the visible "flesh" (1:14). Though Moses heard God's "kabod," he could not see it (Exodus 33:12-34:7). Yet, as John has already asserted in 1:14, "We have seen his glory" and in 1:17-18 "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known." In Jesus, both the honor and visible splendor of God have been made known. Yet, in a twist of divine irony the way in which Jesus takes on both the honor and visible splendor of God is in his self-sacrifice at the cross.

**Glory and Hour** - The two intertwined motifs of Glory and Honor culminate in Jesus' prophetic statement in John 12:27-28, "'Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Jesus recognizes that the only way in which the Father will receive glory (visible splendor and honor) is through the son welcoming his hour (crucifixion). Yet, the Father's response, "'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again'" adds confusion to the narrative. There are three working opinions. First, the "glorified it" refers to the signs Jesus has accomplished and the "will glorify it again" refers to the crucifixion. Second, the "glorified it" refers to God's immediate response in his audible answer and the "will glorify it again" refers to the crucifixion. Third, the "glorified it" refers to the crucifixion (now being realized in the present hour) and the "will glorify it again" refers to the resurrection.

## Devotional Thoughts John 12:20-36

### Save me from this hour.

In John, there is a tough dynamic at play between hardship in people's lives and the glory of God being revealed. For example, Jesus says in John 9 that the man was born blind in order that the work of God could be displayed. Again, in John 11 Jesus says that Lazarus is sick and dying in order that the glory of God may be revealed. Is God alright with his people suffering in order that his glory may be revealed? This is a difficult theological concept to understand and it seems in a way inconsistent with a God who loves us and cares for us. Yet, it is in the life of Jesus that we realize the depth of this theological premise. In John 12:20-27, Jesus recognizes that he is now headed for his brutal and painful death. Rather than petition God to take away this pain and suffering, he acknowledges before God that his pain and suffering will be used for the glory of God. With this recognition, his prayer then becomes, "Father, glorify your name!" In our times of pain, suffering, and hardship, what are our prayers? Should we in the character of the blind man, Lazarus, and Jesus look to see how God might be glorified in our suffering? Is our faith at the point where we could honestly pray, "Father, glorify your name," even if we knew it meant we would suffer?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 12:20-36

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 27

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### Opening Question

- What is your favorite kind of firework?

### In the Word: Read John 12:20-36

- What does Jesus mean when he says, “My hour has now come?”
  - Early in the Gospel, Jesus’ hour has not yet come. What provokes this change?
- Throughout the New Testament the word for glory is doxa and might be better translated honor. How does it change the reading of this passage if you use the word honor instead of glory?
- What does Jesus have to do to bring honor to the Father?
- What do you think the voice from heaven means when it says, “I have [honored] it, and will [honor] it again?”

### In Our Walk

- In your life, how have you tried to live to the honor of your parents?
  - If Jesus is the ultimate revelation of the Father as John contends, then what does it mean to live to honor the Father?
  - What does verse 26 have to do with this idea?
- What relationship does the self-sacrifice of Jesus have to do with light and darkness according to this passage?
  - In your Christian walk, what difference has walking in the light made in your life?

### In Greater Depth

- In verses 20-23 it appears that the Greek’s arrival is the final initiation of Jesus’ “hour.” Why do you think this is? What might John be trying to teach us?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we will recognize the time of our hour for self-sacrifice.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 12:37-50}

## Notes:

### Background

**Isaiah** - John quotes twice from the book of Isaiah in reflection on the earthly ministry of Jesus. Isaiah was a prophet to the Jews during the 8<sup>th</sup> century and the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He depicted the deafness of Israel to God's voice, their willful sinfulness, their inevitable fall to the Babylonians, and the prophetic hope that still remained for the remnant who were faithful. During the time of Jesus, the Jews waited eagerly for the hope of Isaiah. Yet, ironically, when the messiah came they couldn't recognize him for the same reasons their forefathers rejected the prophetic voice of Isaiah. The later quotation from Isaiah 6 was a customary Christian citation used to explain why Jesus had been rejected by his own people as cited by Matthew (13:14), Mark (4:12), and Paul (Acts 28:25). Yet, it is the first quotation from Isaiah 53:1 that best depicts John's portrait of Jesus. Isaiah 53 is the famous passage of the suffering servant and by quoting the first verse John alludes to the entire passage. Thus, when John says Isaiah saw Jesus' glory he is directly alluding to the suffering that is about to come upon Jesus. This is a consistent motif in John. Jesus' glory is not the miracles, the multitudes or the triumphant entry. Instead, it is his self-sacrifice of dying for the good of the people.

### For the Non-Believer

**Praise** - Through the years in ministry, I have worked with some high school girls who have gotten into trouble even though they were raised in great homes by great parents. Though each of them struggled in different ways, such as eating disorders, drugs, sex addictions, or alcoholism, each of their struggles were rooted in the same foundational issue. They longed to be accepted and praised by boys of their same age. It is amazing the stupid things we will do for praise from stupid people. John says that the reason many people who believed in Jesus wouldn't profess their belief was because "they loved praise from men more than praise from God" (12:43). Have you ever made a stupid decision for praise from stupid people? What do you think it would be like to receive praise from God?

## Weekly Schedule Week 28

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch the wonderful introduction video by the Bible Project on Isaiah both parts 1 and 2. On YouTube search Bible Project Isaiah.**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0A6Uchb1f8>**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**12:41** - "Jesus' glory" (*Gk. doxan autou*). Literally, "saw his glory." Jesus or Christ is included by the translations for clarity but may only add confusion.

**12:43** - "praise from men more than praise from God" (*Gk. doxan twon anthropon mallon upper ten doxan tou theou*). Literally, they love the glory of men more than the glory of God. The translations miss the very significant play on words here where the people reject the glory of God out of their concern for the glory of men.

**12:45** - "sees me." Again Jesus testifies that the invisible God has been made visible in himself. When God chooses to make himself known he chooses the venue of humanity. See 1:18 and 14:9.

## Motif

**Light and Darkness** - One of the most prevalent themes in the Gospel according to John is light and darkness. The following chart lays out every usage for both light and the corresponding darkness.

Light	Darkness
1:4 - life was the light of all mankind.	
1:5 - The light shines in the darkness	And the darkness has not overcome it.
1:7-9 - [John the Baptist] came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that give's light to everyone was coming into the world.	
3:19 - Light has come into the world,	But people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.
3:20 - Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.	
3:21 - But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.	
8:12 - [Jesus] said, I am the light of the world.	Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.
9:5 - While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.	
11:10 - It is when a person walks at night that they stumble for they have no light.	
12:35 - Then Jesus told them, you are going to have the light just a little longer. Walk while you have the light,	Before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going.
12:46 - I have come into the world as a light,	So that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

## Devotional Thoughts John 12:37-50

### Light and Dark

Over and over again Jesus talks about light and darkness in the Gospel of John. Maybe we should pay more attention to this significance of this theme in the Gospel. Before reading further, take some time and read through all of the verses concerning light and darkness in the Gospel of John as laid out in the notes. When you read through these, what stands out to you? How do you see the concepts of light and darkness played out in the world around us? How might our ability to manipulate light and dark due to electricity and modern lighting change the way we read these passages? What does it mean that Jesus is the light?

### Rejection

John gives two reasons why people rejected the ministry and messiahship of Jesus. First, they rejected Jesus because they were blind to the true honor in the world as demonstrated in Jesus' self-sacrifice (12:37-41). Second, they rejected Jesus because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. When you think about people you know who have rejected Jesus, how viable are these two reasons still today? What has allowed you to overcome these two elements and profess belief in Jesus?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 12:37-50

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 28

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### Opening Question

- When is a time in your life that you have been rejected?

### In the Word: Read John 12:37-50

- How does this passage serve to summarize the first twelve chapters of the Gospel of John?
- What two reasons does John give for why people rejected Jesus?
  - What is the significance of John quoting from Isaiah, especially Isaiah 53?
- How do you see the theme of honor (translated glory and praise) in verses 37-43?
- What sticks out to you in what Jesus says from verses 44-50?

### In Our Walk

- When is a time in your life that you struggled with loving “the praise of men more than the praise of God?”
  - What helped you in overcoming this?
- What are the different ways we should deal with rejection based on how Jesus deals with rejection?
  - What is the difference between the way the world deals with rejection and the way we as Christians are to deal with rejection?

### In Greater Depth

- How do we reconcile our ability to choose belief in Jesus with the quote John gives us from Isaiah 53:1?  
Can we both believe in free will and be faithful to Isaiah 53:1?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that in our time of rejection we will find acceptance and love in Jesus.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 13:1-30}

## Notes:

### Background

**Social Context** - First, it was standard practice before evening meals throughout the Greco-Roman world to either wash your feet or have your feet washed. This was an activity depicting the social status of all participants for the meal. In most household settings the wife, children, or slaves would wash the feet of a husband returning from his daily activities. For a hosted party, a slave would be provided by the host to wash the guest's feet. If the host could not provide a slave, they would at least provide a basin and towel for the guests to wash their own feet. Second, they washed their feet for a reason. The primary mode of transportation from day to day was walking upon the streets of the town to and from work. In his wonderful commentary on John, Craig Keener describes the quality of the roads, "'Many ancient Eastern streets must have been 'unpaved, narrow, badly crowded,' and some 'would have been choked with refuse and frequented' by dogs and other sources of excrement.'" (Keener, 903). Though respectable Jerusalem would have had better latrine services, the basic nature of the road systems would have caused feet, hands, and faces to be increasingly dirty. Third, the most significant social context is the play of honor and shame that lies behind nearly every ancient activity. Honor and shame was the primary currency of the ancient world substantially more important than money. It was customary for disciples of a teacher to be constantly vying for the place of honor beside the teacher. It was dishonorable to lower yourself to washing someone else's feet. As John Christopher Thomas writes, "those who received footwashing from another were social superiors of those who performed the task."

### For the Non-Believer

**Knowing who you are** - John makes it clear that Jesus only can humiliate himself before his disciples through washing their feet because he knows who he is in relationship to God. Authentic self-knowledge allows us to be unconcerned with social conventions in humility. Do you have enough confidence in who you are to degrade yourself on behalf of someone else?

## Weekly Schedule Week 29

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to the wonderful sermon by the late John Stott on YouTube. Search John Stott John 13 or go directly to:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgO\\_qpMKNLo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgO_qpMKNLo)

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 13:1** - "to the end" (Gk. *telos*). This word denotes completion or fullness. The idea here is that Jesus showed them the fullness of his love.
- 13:1** - This entire first verse is one sentence in the original language.
- 13:2** - "in progress" (Gk. *genemenou*). This could be translated "in progress" or "about to begin." The idea is that it was meal time.
- 13:3** - "under his power" (Gk. *eis tas xeirias*). Literally, "the father had given all things into his hands."
- 13:4** - "so." The so or because does not exist in the original language, but is included to show the connection between v. 3 and v. 4. V. 3 is what provokes the action of v. 4.
- 13:10** - "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean." As the footwashing is more than just an act of service, it is the foreshadowing of Jesus' crucifixion so Jesus is saying that the disciples need nothing more than to allow Jesus to die on the cross for them. This is complicated for the disciples as they expect no such thing of the Messiah.
- 13:15** - "you should do as I have done for you." More than just a command to serve, Jesus is calling on his disciples to lay down their lives for one another just as he is laying down his life for them.

## Theme

**Literary Context** - Until chapter 12 Jesus has continually said that his hour has not yet come (2:1-4; 4:21-23; 5:25-28; 7:30; 8:20). Yet, after raising Lazarus from the dead, he announces that "the hour has come for the son of Man to be glorified" (12:23). This hour is a reference to his crucifixion. John references this to initiate the foot washing narrative (13:1). He continues to say that Jesus "loved them to the end" (13:1). Keener points out that this is Johannine double entendre: it can imply "to the utmost," "fully," as well as "to the point of death" (Keener, 899). Jesus is not just about to serve them, he is displaying the fullness of his love, which is the crucifixion. John then intentionally uses the language "took off his outer clothing/put on his clothes" (13:4, 12). This is literally translated "lay aside/take up," and the only other place in John where these phrases occur together is in 10:17-18 when Jesus describes himself as the shepherd laying aside his life to take it up again. Finally, John says Jesus "wrapped a towel around his waist" (13:4). John uses the word *Levition*, which refers to a common piece of cloth or linen, but it can also refer to the cloth that was worn as someone was about to be crucified. Putting all this together, John is saying that in washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus is dying for them. This is Jesus' prophetic portrayal of his forthcoming crucifixion.

## Devotional Thoughts John 13:1-30

### Service

Who do you choose to serve? Your spouse, child, friend? Does your closeness with a person determine the extent to which you will serve them? For most of us it probably does. When Jesus goes to wash the feet of the disciples, he washes the feet of someone who will betray him to his death (Judas) and someone who will deny knowing him while he is dying (Peter). Though Jesus knew what both people were going to do, he still lowered himself to the point of a slave and washed the dust, dirt, and dog feces off their feet. Then, he calls his disciples to do the same. In 13:14 Jesus says, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." Jesus demonstrates and then teaches that being his authentic disciple means giving over your pride and ego to serve someone else. This activity is not based upon your closeness to that person, but God's closeness with you. Jesus performs this shameful activity because he "knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God" (13:2). In the same way, we know that we are children of God, heirs of his kingdom, having come from God, and awaiting our return to God. Thus, we can serve *anyone... right?*



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 13:1-30

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 29

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### Opening Question

- What is the grossest thing you've ever done to serve another person?

### In the Word: Read John 13:1-30

- Considering the social context, what is the significance of Jesus washing his disciples' feet?
- John says that, in the foot washing, Jesus now "loved them to the end (or to the fullest)." What is the fullness of Jesus' love?
  - How does the foot washing serve to describe the fullest extent of Jesus' love?
  - What other points in this passage support this symbolism?
- What does Jesus know, according to John, before he washes his disciples' feet (verse 3)?
  - Why is this significant enough for John to point out?
- Why do you think Peter struggles to let Jesus wash his feet?
- What do you think motivates Judas to betray Jesus?

### In Our Walk

- In this passage, whose feet are you surprised Jesus washes? Why?
- What does Jesus mean in 13:14 when he says, "now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet?"
  - What type of people do we usually shy away from serving?
  - How does knowing who we are in relationship to God help us serve all people?

### In Greater Depth (Optional)

- Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus has talked a lot about his hour. Read the following passages from John: 2:1-4; 4:21-23; 5:25-28; 7:30; 8:20.
  - What do these passages teach us about Jesus' understanding of his hour?
  - In what way does Jesus' relationship with his hour change in John 13:1-2?
  - How does this correspond with the symbolic significance of him washing his disciples' feet?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray for the resurrection and that all our friends who do not know Jesus as the Messiah can come to know him.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 13:31-38}

## Notes:

### Background

**Peter** - Peter plays a very specific role in the Gospel of John as demonstrated in his three main interactions with Jesus. First, in John 13:6 Jesus is washing the disciple's feet and everything is going along smoothly till he reaches Peter. Peter is so ashamed that Jesus is doing this, he can't help but speak. He tells Jesus he will never allow him to wash his feet. When Jesus replies that Peter will have no part with him, he again tries to control the situation by having Jesus wash his whole body. Second, in the present text Peter tells Jesus that he will follow him anywhere despite the fact that Jesus has said the disciples can't follow him. Peter boldly says he will die for Jesus! Yet, Jesus makes it clear that Peter will do no such thing. Finally, in John 18:8-11, the high priest comes to arrest Jesus just as Jesus has predicted and God has planned. In this interaction, Peter doesn't speak but he does act by pulling out his sword and cutting off the high priest's ear. What do these three interactions teach us? Timothy Wiarda summarizes it well. "Peter combines devotion to Jesus with resistance to the idea that Jesus should take up the role of good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep... In each episode, Peter steps out from the disciple group and takes exception to something Jesus is doing or saying. In each case, he displays the same combination of devotion and resistance... to Jesus in his role as Peter's good shepherd" (*The Portrayal of Peter and Atonement Theology in the Gospel of John* BBR 21.4 (2011): 508).

### For the Non-Believer

**Love** - I find that many times when I talk to people who are not Christians they tell me a true horror story of how a Christian treated them or a member of their family. Based on that story, they say they want nothing to do with Christians. It is a sad fact that many people have been hurt by Christians especially when Jesus made it very clear he wanted his disciples (Christians) known by their love. So as a Christian, if you have been hurt by a Christian, I'll ask for your forgiveness. Is there any way that you would allow us to demonstrate the love of Jesus to you?

## Weekly Schedule Week 30

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Work through the Bible study called “Crazy Love” by Francis Chan. It is an thoughtful book and there are video resources available.**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**13:32** - "at once" (*Gk. euthus*). Literally, "immediately." See note below.

**13:32** - "If God is glorified in him." Many of the earliest and best manuscripts do not have this introductory phrase, but the vast majority do. Scholars are divided on what to do with it, but most include it. Regardless, it doesn't change the meaning or significance of the passage.

**13:33** - "look for me" (*Gk. zetew*). Literally, "seek me." See note below.

**13:34** - "A new command I give you." Scholars agree this is covenantal language. Just as the ten commandments were the ethical parameters for God's covenant with Israel, so now the ethical parameters for the new covenant is love.

**13:37-38** - "lay down my life." There is irony in Peter's statement "I will lay down my ("mou") life for you." (13:37). Jesus replies, "Will you really lay down your life for me ("emou"). This is an emphatic change in tone. See John 10:11, 15, 17.

## Themes

**Seek** - An often unnoticed motif in the Gospel of John is centered around the word seek. In 1:38 Jesus asks the disciples what they seek and in 4:38 the disciples refuse to ask Jesus what he was seeking of the Samaritan woman. There is an intentional play throughout this narrative with the word "zeteo" (seek) that goes unnoticed in contemporary translations. In chapter seven this motif climaxes. Jesus' brothers critique that a person who seeks to be known publicly does not do things in secret. The Jewish leaders then seek him (7:11, 30) in order that they might kill him (7:1, 19, 20, 25). Jesus critiques the crowds for seeking to honor themselves (7:18). In contrast the only thing Jesus seeks is to honor the one who sent him (7:18). The irony is that those who are seeking him in order to kill him will not be able to find him because they can't go where he will be (7:34). In chapter 13 Jesus places the disciples in the same category as the Jewish leaders, though they seek him they won't find him.

**Love** - The teaching of Love is not new in the revelation of God. "What is new here is the standard for this love: 'as I have loved you' (13:34; cf. 1 John 2:8). By laying down his life for others, Jesus loved the disciples more than his own life (11:5; 13:1). John's terms of personal comparison... underline the force of the demand; it applies both to Jesus' relationship with his Father (5:23; 12:50) and to that of his disciples with himself (15:12; 17:14), the latter often modeled after Jesus' relationship with his Father (6:57; 10:15; 15:9-10; 17:18, 21, 23; 20:21)" (Keener, 924).

## Devotional Thoughts John 13:31-38

### Three Times

One of Jesus' closest friends and allies is Peter. Yet, when Peter says that he will die for Jesus, Jesus predicts that Peter won't actually do that. Instead he will deny he knows Jesus... three times! Three times is a lot. Can you imagine your spouse, parents or kids denying they know you three times? How much would that hurt? Although we might forgive a person three times, I doubt many of us would still allow that person to play a prominent role in our lives. Yet, Jesus not only still loves Peter after he denies him, he actually reinstates him as one of the leaders of the early church after the resurrection (John 21:15-19). I think we know that God will forgive us as many times as we ask, but we think after we've denied him a few times he no longer has a significant place for us in his church. Yet, Jesus' interaction with Peter shows us that no matter how many times we fail him, Jesus always has a role for us in his kingdom. It's not as if after we fail him a couple times we are relegated to being a "back-row Christian." Jesus not only forgives you, but he longs for you to be an active member of his community of love. What fear of failure has kept or is keeping you from serving the church?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 13:1-38

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 30

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### This week is different!

The only way to truly understand or live John 13:1-17 is to put it into practice. I am encouraging all of the LIFE Groups to facilitate a night of mutual foot washing. I will give you a few points to help:

1. Read the text: John 13:1-17; 31-38. *What is the significance of Jesus washing the disciples' feet?*
2. This will be messy and awkward. Just as it was in the time of Jesus. Also, just like ministry is. Messy is good. Go outside if needed.
3. Every person should be involved in both washing and having their feet wash.
4. Have a few pitchers or pales or a hose available. These don't have to be ornate. Actually, it would be more in line with the scenario of Jesus if they weren't.
5. Do not allow spouses or family members to wash each other's feet. This is an easy way out.

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that our love for one another in the church might be more than just lip service. Pray that we might wash each other's feet in our self-sacrifice.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 14:1-14}

## Notes:

### Background

**Dwelling Place** - It is easy for contemporary readers of John to think that the “Father’s house” of 14:2-4 refers to the final resting place of believers in heaven. Yet, first century Jews, like the disciples, would not have heard this reference in that way. Likewise, John has been developing specific motifs to guide his audience’s understanding of this text. Most likely, the disciples would have understood the “Father’s house” to be the temple. Thus, the disciples might have understood Jesus to be telling them he is preparing a place at the temple for them though they can’t come now. Yet, John has given his audience further insight concerning the nature of the temple in Jesus’ teaching. First, throughout the O.T. the temple was the place where God dwelled among his people (2 Chronicles 7:1). Second, the prophets predicted that God would move his dwelling place from the temple to a more relational presence with his people (Ezekiel 37:27). Third, in John 2:16-19, Jesus teaches that God’s presence in the temple now dwelled in Jesus (see also John 1:14). Second, the word for dwelling place (Gk. *monē*) only occurs in the N.T. one other time: John 14:23. In 14:23, Jesus promises that if the disciples will be obedient, he and the Father will come and make their dwelling place (Gk. *monē*) with them. Thus, Jesus is telling his disciples not to be troubled that he is going to the cross, because in doing so he will prepare a place for them. This place is not some ethereal mansion. Instead, it is a place in the community of the Father and the Son through the Spirit.

### For the Non-Believer

**Believe** - A 2015 Pew Research study showed that 89% of Americans believe in God. Yet, nearly one quarter of the population has no religious affiliation. That means that there is a significant group of people who believe in God, yet, have no clear definition of who God is. Jesus tells his disciples, “you believe in God, now believe in me” (John 14:1). Jesus suggests that for people who vaguely believe God exist, Jesus can provide the concrete expression of his identity, but that depends on whether we actually want to know what God is like.

## Weekly Schedule Week 31

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch the useful (and funny) two part lecture by Rick Atchley from Pepperdine Bible Lectures. Search Youtube Rick Atchley, The Parting Gift.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_LvcPa0dLdY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LvcPa0dLdY)

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**14:1** - *“Troubled”* (Gk. *tarassesthw*). The same word is used to describe Jesus in 11:33; 12:27; 13:21. The crucifixion is the source of concern.

**14:1** - *“Trust in God; trust also in me”* (Gk. *Pisteuete*). This can be translated a variety of ways, but the root word is believe. It can be imperative, “Believe (trust) in God, believe (trust) also in me. Indicative, “You believe in God and you also believe in me.” Or a mix, “You believe in God, believe also in me.”

**14:6** - *“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”* Some scholars have argued that the three words should be combined to form “I am the true way to life.” Yet, John uses the same form here that he usually uses in listing three things (John 2:14; 16:18).

**14:7** - *“If you really knew me, you would know my father as well.”* “There is a difficult textual problem here: The statement reads either ‘If you have known me, you will know my Father’ or ‘if you had really known me, you would have known my Father’... Although a decision is difficult, the first-class condition is to be slightly preferred. In this case Jesus promises the disciples that, assuming they have known him, they will know the Father. Contextually, this fits better with the following phrase (v. 7b) which asserts that “from the present time you know him and have seen him” (cf. John 1:18)” (NET Bible 14:7).

## Background

**Way, Truth, Life** - Craig Keener contends, “‘Truth’ and ‘life’ merely clarify the ‘way’ in this passage, as in Jewish wisdom tradition, God’s ways were truth and life (Prov 2:19; 3:2, 16, 18; 4:10, 13, 22)” (Keener, 943). Andreas Kostenberger disagrees arguing from John’s literary style that all three words should be listed. In any reading it is clear that Jesus is taking upon himself the fullness of God’s revelation in the O.T. Just as knowing Jesus is to know the Father, so Jesus defines for a lost, lying, and dying humanity what is the way, the truth, and the life. In the contemporary pluralistic world of ambiguous relativism, this is a bold statement.

**Where You are Going** - It is important not to separate chapter 14 from the continued dialogue that begins in chapter 13 and runs through chapter 17. Jesus has just told Peter that he couldn’t come with him where he was going. Peter’s ignorant, but devoted, response showed he didn’t know what Jesus was talking about. Thus, it should be no surprise that when Jesus says the disciples know where Jesus is going, a confused Thomas says, essentially, “no we don’t!” Of course, Thomas is searching for a physical way, a path or road. Yet, Jesus is talking about the way of the cross. They still don’t understand what Jesus has tried to teach them in John 10:11-17; 12:23-25, 32-33).

## Devotional Thoughts John 14:1-14

### Greater Things

Jesus emphatically teaches his disciples that based on their belief in him they will be able to do the miraculous signs that he has done. Not only that, but they will actually do greater things than Jesus did! That is hard to get our mind around and, yet, if we take a broad perspective of the work of Christians throughout history across the world it becomes more reconcilable. Jesus has a lavish, dynamic concept of the church as people who are empowered by the Holy Spirit (we will talk about over the next few months). The church is the presence of God in the world, just as Jesus was the presence of God in the world. Yet, this thought cannot be separated from the following thought. These greater things will only happen in the name of the Son, to the honor of the Father, and because the Son has been faithful to the Father through his death and resurrection. Our Spirit-driven, Son-originated work in this world is not for our personal gain or glory. It is to bring honor to the Father. Because the Son will do anything to honor the Father and will do nothing that is dishonorable to the Father, so he grants our requests only in the honor of the Father. Do you really believe the church can do greater works than Jesus? Why is honor so important in this conversation?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 14:1-14

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 31

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### Opening Question

- What is currently causing you worry or stress?

### In the Word: Read John 14:1-14

- What do the disciples have to be worried about?
- What did the phrase “my Father’s house” mean to the disciples in John?
  - How does that help us understand what Jesus is talking about when he talks about his father’s house?
- Where is Jesus going (verse 4) and why should the disciples already know the way?
- In your Faith personally, what is so significant about Jesus being the exact representation of God?
- Throughout the Gospel of John, what are the works that the Father has been doing through Jesus?

### In Our Walk

- Jesus says that anyone who believes in him will do the works he has done. Not only that but they will do greater things. What do you think he means by this?
  - What relationship is there between the disciples doing greater things than Jesus and the Father being “honored” in the Son (verse 13)?
- Why do we struggle with worry and stress so much if Jesus says he will do anything we ask him in his name?

### For Our Non-Believing Friends

- How does our ability to do the works of God help provoke belief in Jesus in this world?
  - What are the greatest works of God in Jesus and how does that give us guidance to doing the works of God?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we will learn to trust more fully in Jesus.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 14:15-31}

## Notes:

### Background

**Paraklete** - John is the only author in the NT who uses the word “Counselor” (Gk. Paraklete) for the Holy Spirit. This leads to two very related questions. First, why does John use this term in recalling Jesus teaching? Second, how would the first century Jewish-Christian believers have understood paraklete? We will address the later first and try not to get too technical. Scholars are divided on the background to the term paraklete. Starting with Origen (late 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), many scholars have associated this passive noun in John with the related active verb used in the OT: “to console.” Thus, they understand the Paraklete to be the “consoler” or “counselor.” Yet, this is poor semantic scholarship as the passive noun form of a word is very often unrelated to the active verb. Another view connects paraklete with the semantically related word paraklysis, which means “preaching and teaching.” Though this is probable, it is a stretch semantically and contextually. Finally, many scholars find a forensic background to this term as found in classical and rabbinic usage where it is translated “advocate.” This appears to be the best translation for paraklete as it is supported in Jewish literature and the Roman court system. Why then does John use this term? Throughout his Gospel John has been developing a trial motif. *Notes continued on back...*

### For the Non-Believer

**Show Himself** - I’ve heard people say that if they could just see the resurrected Jesus they would believe in him. Yet, Jesus teaches this in reverse. He says that he will only reveal himself to those who believe. I struggled with this a lot in my life. Why doesn’t Jesus just make it known to everyone who he is, if he really is who he says he is? It hit me one day that I have it backwards. If Jesus really is God as he claims to be, then, because he is God, he best knows how to provoke genuine faith in himself. In my limited perspective I might think I need to see more or hear more, but the one who holds all knowledge with eternal perspective teaches that my belief in him is what provokes his self-revelation. Am I willing to set aside my limited perspective to see things through his eternal perspective?

## Weekly Schedule Week 32

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch the useful (and funny) two part lecture by Rick Atchley from Pepperdine Bible Lectures. Search Youtube Rick Atchley, The Parting Gift**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_LvcPa0dLdY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LvcPa0dLdY)

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**14:15** - "Obey" (*Gk. teresete*). Literally, "will keep." This is covenant language.

**14:17** - "accept" (*Gk. labein*). Literally, "receive." The idea here is that the believers should eagerly receive him though the world is not capable of receiving him.

**14:17** - "lives with you" (*Gk. menei*). This is a return to the dwell or remain motif that dominates the Gospel of John (John 1:32, 33, 38, 39; 2:12; 3:36; 5:38; 6:27, 56; 7:9; 8:31, 35; 10:40; 12:24, 34, 46; 14:10, 16, 17, 25; 15:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 16; 21:22, 23).

**14:18** - "I will come to you." "Jesus had spoken in 14:3 of going away and coming again to his disciples. There the reference was both to the Parousia (the second coming of Christ) and to the postresurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples. Here the postresurrection appearances are primarily in view, since Jesus speaks of the disciples "seeing" him after the world can 'see' him no longer in the following verse. But many commentators have taken v. 18 as a reference to the coming of the Spirit, since this has been the topic of the preceding verses... It may well be that another Johannine double meaning is found here, so that Jesus 'returns' to his disciples in one sense in his appearances to them after his resurrection, but in another sense he 'returns' in the person of the Holy Spirit to indwell them." NET Bible.

## Background

**Commandments** - In John, it is common to hear Jesus say to follow or keep his commandments (John 8:5; 10:18; 12:49, 50; 13:34; 14:15, 21, 31; 15:10, 12, 14, 17). Jesus describes an innate connection between loving God and keeping his commands (13:34; 14:15). In the covenant tradition of Judaism, loving God and keeping his commands go hand in hand (Exod. 20:6; Deut 5:10; 7:9; 11:1, 13; 30:16). The ancient Jews believed that at the end times the Torah would be renewed rather than destroyed. Jesus appears to be accentuating this understanding as he renews the old covenants with new commands to love (John 13:34). Just as in the old covenants, a person cannot merit or earn a covenant with God through love. Rather, the love for God is expressed in keeping his commands, namely, to love. It is a relationship of reciprocity as the Son demonstrates his love of the Father by keeping the Father's commands.

**Paraklete cont.** - Witnesses such as John the Baptist, the Samaritan woman, the disciples, witnesses at the cross, and the evangelist himself are called to testify. Likewise, in John 5, Jesus says that his signs, the Father, and God's word are all witnesses. Though the trial will have its break-through moment in the resurrection, the disciples will still be on trial in the world. Yet, they won't be alone in this trial. The advocate will be sent to help them teach the world of the truth about Jesus. Thus, John continues his courtroom motif by relating Jesus paraklete' language. This study will continue in further notes.

## Devotional Thoughts John 14:15-31

### Paraklete

Jesus says that he will send another "paraklete," which can mean advocate, helper, or comforter. The word paraklete derives from two words: the adverb "para" and verb "kalew." Para means alongside and kalew means to call. Literally, it means "the one called alongside" or "called to help." This is an important nuance in understanding the role of the Spirit. Jesus knows that his disciples will find themselves in a dilemma after he leaves. They will long to love him by keeping his commands. Yet, the world will not accept them and want to pull them away from loving Jesus (14:17). They will feel like orphans (14:18). Though they long to follow the commands of Jesus, their sinfulness will prevent them. In other words, they need help! They need the one who comes to the cry for help: the Paraklete. Our lives are the same today. Too often our tenacious American individualism teaches us to never ask for help. Those who are the strongest don't need it. Yet, Jesus teaches the only way through our spiritual dilemma is to cry out for the one who can help us! We cannot keep the commands of Jesus on our own. We must be a people willing to cry out for the helper. In what dimensions of your walk with Jesus do you need to cry out for the helper?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 14:15-31

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 32

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### Opening Question

- When have you been caught in a dilemma?

### In the Word: Read John 14:15-31

- What is the dilemma of discipleship found in verse 15?
- According to this passage, how does the Holy Spirit help in this dilemma?
- John is the only NT author to describe the Holy Spirit as the “Paraklete” or “advocate.” Why do you think this is?
- What are some of the primary roles ascribed to the Holy Spirit in these verses?

### In Our Walk

- In your walk with Jesus, how have you struggled with the dilemma of loving Jesus and trying to keep his commands?
  - When is a time that you have failed to keep his commands?
  - When is a time that you have succeeded?
  - How has the “advocate” helped you when you succeeded?
- Twice in this chapter Jesus has commanded the disciples “do not let your hearts be troubled” (verses 1, 27). What in this chapter helps you when you are stressed, anxious, or troubled at heart?

### In Greater Depth

- In the Roman world the “paraklete” was an advocate for your defense in a Roman trial. How have you seen a trial motif develop in the Gospel of John? *Notice especially John 5.*
  - How does that give us insight into why John recalls Jesus referring to the Holy Spirit as the “paraklete?”

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can be people that cry out for the help of the Holy Spirit.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 15:1-8}

## Notes:

### Background

**True Vine** - Time and time again, scripture portrays Israel as a vine (Ps 80:8-16; Is 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Ezek 15:1-8; 17:5-10; 19:10-14; Hos 10:1). Psalm 80 even depicts the history of Israel from the perspective of the vine. "You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it... Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine, the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raise up for yourself" (Ps 80:8, 14-15). Historically, during the Maccabean reign (164-63 BC) there is frequent coinage depicting the vine metaphor for Israel (shown in the next column). Yet, the most significant background of the vine metaphor comes from the prophet Ezekiel who appears to play a prominent role in the background to this entire dialogue. In Ezekiel 15, Jerusalem is depicted as worthless wood off of the vine, discarded, and thrown into the fire. Jesus uses this same imagery to describe those who don't remain in him (John 15:4). Likewise, in Ezekiel 17 God says he will plant a shoot on the mountains of Israel which will bear fruit just as Jesus has told the disciples they will bear fruit (15:4-5). Jesus appears in this text to be taking upon himself the fullness of Israel, not only as King, but as the newly chosen people. Jesus is the true vine, which brings honor to the father by the fruit of his disciples (15:7-8).

### For the Non-Believer

**Our Fruit** - Just today I ate a pear that was absolutely incredible. It was soft but not too soft. It was sweet but like a mellow sweet that wasn't overwhelming. The only problem was that I had to share it! Jesus says that the people who believe in him will bear fruit and this fruit will be everlasting (John 15:16). In the Gospel of John, the fruit that a follower of Jesus bears is love: self-sacrificial, God-honoring love. Jesus describes people who don't follow his way as a withered old branch that produces no good fruit. I know people like this that who at the end of their life have only created chaos, hate, and destruction. If they bore any fruit, it was extremely bitter. One of the best ways to reflect on our life is to look at the condition of your fruit. Is it bitter or loving? If it's bitter, might the way of Jesus allow it to be loving?

## Weekly Schedule Week 33

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**

**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to Francis Chan preach on "I am the True Vine."**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Akk6MiuvZWA>**



# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**15:2, 3** - "*Prune, Clean*" (Gk. *Katharw, Katharos*). The word the NIV translates "prune" in v. 2 is the verbal form of the word "clean" used in v. 3. It literally means to "purify" or "clean." The concept is that the Father purifies the vines to be more fruitful, but the disciples have already been purified because of what Jesus has taught them.

**15:3** - "*already clean.*" The only other place in John where this phrase is used is John 13:10 in the midst of the footwashing narrative.

**15:4, 5, 6, 7** - "*remain*" (Gk. *menei*). This is a return to the dwell or remain motif that dominates the Gospel of John (John 1:32, 33, 38, 39; 2:12; 3:36; 5:38; 6:27, 56; 7:9; 8:31, 35; 10:40; 12:24, 34, 46; 14:10, 16, 17, 25; 15:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 16; 21:22, 23).

**15:8** - "*glory*" (Gk. *daxadzw*). This is better understood as honor. Once again, the disciple's requests being answered in the name of Jesus is connected to the honor given to the Father.

## Theme

**Ask and It Will Be Done** - "Once again Jesus promises the disciples ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you. This recalls 14:13-14, where the disciples were promised that if they asked anything in Jesus' name it would be done for them. The two thoughts are really quite similar, since here it is conditioned on the disciples' remaining in Jesus and his words remaining in them. The first phrase relates to the genuineness of their relationship with Jesus. The second phrase relates to their obedience. When both of these qualifications are met, the disciples would in fact be asking in Jesus' name and therefore according to his will." NET Bible, 15:7, 24.

**Remain in Me** - This often overlooked motif might be the most central theme in the Gospel of John (1:38-39; 4:40; 7:33; 11:54; 13:33; 14:17, 25; 16:4). In most of John, this motif has developed in regard to the disciples remaining alongside Jesus in his earthly ministry. Yet, in this final discourse Jesus deepens this concept to an intimate, personal mutual indwelling of Jesus through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (14:17; 15:4-10). The disciples are now the dwelling place (noun for remain) of God (14:23) just as the Father dwells within the Son and the Son within the Father (14:10). Thus, disciples commune in the relationship of the Father and the Son through the Spirit.

## Background

**Prune** - The Christian botanist Nigel Hepper writes, "Pruning of the vines takes place during winter dormancy, and, except for side shoots, not at the height of development (Isa 18:5). The previous season's growth is cut back and the long leafless twigs are used for fuel (John 15:6). Pruning helps to ensure that the fruit is of good quality, for otherwise during the following season there would be too many clusters of fruit to be nourished by the roots, resulting in only poor grapes." Hepper, *Plants*, 98.

## Devotional Thoughts John 15:1-8

### Bear Fruit

Jesus says that a tell-tale sign of his disciples is that they bear fruit. Three important things should be pointed out from this discussion. First, bearing fruit does not earn a place as a disciple. It is not as if we have a certain threshold of fruit-bearing that we must hit in order to be a disciple! Second, bearing fruit demonstrates the health of the branch in regards to its connection to the vine (15:4-5). It is the relationship a disciple has with Jesus that promotes a healthy branch that bears fruit. Third, interestingly enough, Jesus does not command or tell the disciples anywhere in this passage to bear fruit. The closest he comes to saying this is v. 8 when he says, "that you bear much fruit." Yet, this is not an imperative (do this) statement, it is indicative (as it is). The only imperative command Jesus gives in this dialogue is to "remain in me" (15:4). Likewise, in his series of conditional statements (if, then) each conditional clause begins with remaining in him i.e. "if you remain in me" (15:5). Our ability to bear fruit does not come from a focused effort to bear fruit. Rather, it is the natural happening of a branch that remains part of the vine. We don't strive to bear fruit; we strive to remain in Jesus. How have your attempts to bear fruit failed? How has John taught us that we remain in Jesus?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 15:1-8

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 33

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### Opening Question

- What is your favorite fruit?

### In the Word: Read John 15:1-8

- Why is it so important that God prunes the branches that don't bear fruit?
  - How do you think God prunes?
- What are the two conditions in which the Father will do whatever you wish?
  - How do those conditions help give insight into this promise by Jesus?

### In Our Walk

- Jesus says that a tell-tale sign of his disciples is that they bear fruit. Three important things should be pointed out from this discussion. First, bearing fruit does not earn a place as a disciple. It is not as if we have a certain threshold of fruit-bearing that we must hit in order to be a disciple! Second, bearing fruit demonstrates the health of the branch in regard to its connection to the vine (15:4-5). It is the relationship a disciple has with Jesus that promotes a healthy branch that bears fruit. Third, interestingly enough, Jesus does not command or tell the disciples anywhere in this passage to bear fruit. The closest he comes to saying this is in verse 8 when he says, "that you bear much fruit." Yet, this is not an imperative (do this) statement, it is indicative (as it is). We don't strive to bear fruit; we strive to remain in Jesus and he bears fruit through us.
  - In your life, how have your attempts to bear fruit failed?
  - When have you seen Jesus bear fruit despite your failures?
  - How has John taught us that we remain in Jesus?
  - Who in your group have you seen demonstrate one of these qualities?

### In Greater Depth

- One of the central metaphors in the Old Testament is Israel as a vine. Read through the following passages: Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15:1-8; 17:5-10; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1.
  - What sticks out to you about the imagery in these passages?
  - How do these passages provide context for understanding John 15:1-8?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can remain in the vine and bear much fruit.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 15:9-17}

## Notes:

### Motif

**Love in John** - John centers his Gospel around the concept of divine love. For John, the basis of Jesus' love for the disciples is in the love between the Father and the Son. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love" (15:9). Further, the love the disciples are to have for one another comes from the love Jesus has demonstrated to them. "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." This might be described as a trickle-down economy of love where the Father, in his wealth of love, passes it to the Son, who passes it to the disciples, who pass it to one another. John has provided at least four major descriptions of this divine and how it relates to the disciples. First, love turns over control. "The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands" (John 3:35). The demonstration of the Father's love for the Son is in his turning over control into the hands of the Son. Likewise, Jesus relinquishes control to the disciples. In his dialogue with them in John 14, he teaches them they will do greater things than he and that he will send them an advocate to help them. Second, Jesus' love for the Father is obedience. F. F. Bruce writes, "Jesus' love for the Father was shown in his obedience to him, and was requited in his constant awareness of the Father's loving approval: 'he has not left me alone', he said, 'because I always do the things that are pleasing to him' (John 8:29). So the disciples' love for their Master should be shown in their obedience to him, and their requital will be the constant awareness of their Master's loving approval thus they will remain in the love of him who remain in the Father's love" (Bruce, *John*, 310). Third, the love of the Father and the Son is transparent. "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does" (John 5:20). This transparency of purpose and action comes to the disciples as well (John 15:15). Fourth, the love of the Father and the Son is self-sacrificial. "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life" (John 10:17). Jesus expects the same sacrificial love for his disciples. "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

## Weekly Schedule Week 34

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

**Additional Resources:**  
**Work through the series by Bill Hull "Love as Jesus' loved" available through Rightnow Media.**

<https://www.rightnow.org/Content/Series/1227>

For a Rightnow Media

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**15:9** - “Remain” (Gk. *menoi*). This is a continuation of the dwell or remain motif that dominates the Gospel of John (John 1:32, 33, 38, 39; 2:12; 3:36; 5:38; 6:27, 56; 7:9; 8:31, 35; 10:40; 12:24, 34, 46; 14:10, 16, 17, 25; 15:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 16; 21:22, 23).

**15:12** - “Command” (Gk. *entola*). Note that the commands of Jesus found in 14:15 and 15:10 now switch to a singular command: love.

**15:15** - “Servants” (Gk. *doulos*). Or “slaves.” The idea is that there is a difference between the status of slaves and friends of God.

**15:16** - “Bear fruit” (Gk. *karpov pherhte*). In English, this may appear as a command, “bear fruit.” Yet, in Greek, the verb, “bear” is in the subjunctive mood. “The meaning of the subjunctive in the Greek is generally to indicate *potentiality*” (Machen, *New Testament Greek*, 177). Thus, the verb means that bearing fruit is available for the disciples. In the NIV, this is demonstrated with the word “might” before go.

## Background

**Friendship** - In this passage, Jesus progresses the relationship between himself and the disciples by moving them from the status of his slaves to the status of his friends. Despite their confusion, he had already acted out this progression in his washing of their feet (John 13:1-18). In both Jewish and Greco-Roman writings, friendship is one of the primary virtues and dimensions to life. In Roman circles, friendship did not have to be between social equals and often wasn't. Yet, the friendship created a form of equality in the relationship despite the social inequality. Jesus appears to employ the friendship status for two main reasons. First, throughout the Mediterranean world (and the world as a whole) there is a connection between friendship and love. In Greek, the word for friend (*phile*) stems from one of the words for love (*philew*). Likewise, the Greek philosopher Plutarch demonstrates the connection between friendship and love. He wrote, “The great difference between flatterer and friend may be most clearly perceived by his disposition towards one's other friends. For a friend finds it most pleasant to love and be loved along with many others, and he is always constant in his endeavours that his friend shall have many friends and be much in honour; believing that ‘friends own everything in common’ he thinks that no possession ought to be held in common as friends” (Plutarch, *Flatterer*, 24). Plutarch, among other philosophers, argued that true friends were known through their love. Second, the ancients (and moderns) understood that a person withheld no secrets from their friends. The Jewish historian at the time of Jesus, Josephus, wrote, “allows us to conceal nothing for our friends, for there is no friendship without absolute confidence; in the vent of subsequent estrangement, it forbids the disclosure of secrets” (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.*, 2.207). Thus, Jesus designates his disciples as friends for he keeps no secrets (15:15).

## Devotional Thoughts John 15:9-17

### Love of Friends

This week the Olympics are coming to a close in Rio De Janeiro. One of the main story lines has had nothing to do with the athletic competitions. Four swimmers, most notably Ryan Lochte, are in the midst of a scandal in which they lied about being robbed at gun point. It is still unclear what the truth is, but officials in Brazil have suspended their passports except that Ryan Lochte has already returned to the US. Yet, the other three friends remain under suspicion in Brazil and the same Brazilian officials are requesting Lochte be returned to Brazil for questioning. Today on talk radio the debate has been whether Lochte should return to Brazil and face possible charges that might help in the defense of his three friends or whether he should remain safely in the United States. This is where the definition of true friendship comes into question. Jesus says that the greatest form of love is to give over your life for your friends (John 15:13). This is what Christian love looks like. It is self-sacrificial. Would you give your life over for your friends? Would you risk time in a Brazilian prison if it meant freedom for your friends? In what way does Jesus illustrate the depth of his love for us through cross?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 15:9-17

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 34

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### Opening Question

- What's your favorite love song?

### In the Word: Read John 15:9-17

- According to this passage, what is the root of all love?
- What are some defining qualities of the love between the Father and the Son in this passage?
  - What do the following four passages teach us about the love between the Father and the Son?
    - *John 3:31-35?*
    - *John 5:19-21?*
    - *John 14:30-31?*
    - *John 10:17?*

### In Our Walk

- What are some major differences between the way our culture defines love and Jesus defines love?
- Jesus says that his disciples should love each other in the same way the Son loves the Father. We have already explored a few of the qualities of the love between the Father and the Son. Which quality do you think God is calling you to work on in your life?
  - Who in your group have you seen demonstrate one of these qualities?

### In Greater Depth

- How does Jesus change the relationship status he has with the disciples in this passage?
  - Why do you think he does this?
  - What does this have to do with love?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can love in the way that the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 15:18-16:4}

## Notes:

### Background

**Hate and Friendship** - In 15:15, Jesus modifies his relationship with the disciples from slaves to friends in order that they might share in his love relationship with the Father. As demonstrated in the Plutarch quote in the previous notes, one of the primary dimensions of friendship in the ancient world was that a friend was a friend to a friend's friends (take it slow and you'll get it). In the same way, it was customary in the ancient world for a friend to be enemies with the friend's enemies. "In the system of political alliances found in at least many Mediterranean cities, if one was friends with another's enemy, one became the other's enemy as well" (Keener, 1019). Thus, Jesus is continuing to teach his disciples, who are now his friends, that the world will hate them because the world hated Jesus (John 15:18). As his disciples, they cannot remain friends with the world, for a friend would never love a friend's enemy. It was customary in farewell addresses to provide a warning. In this case, Jesus does the same by warning his disciples that their newfound alliance to Jesus will bring them persecution and hatred from the world just as it has brought (and will bring) persecution and hatred to Jesus from the world.

### For the Non-Believer

**Love or Hate** - John Dickson writes, "There is an awkward question that atheist critics ought to face. It has to do with atheism's intellectual capacity to restrain hatred and inspire love. Christians and atheist alike are capable of both love and hate. Agreed. But when Christians love, they do so in full accordance with their worldview that begins with the love of God and the inherent value of his much-loved creatures. When Christians hate, they do so in logical defiance of that worldview. But here is the question: what is there in the atheist's perspective that can rationally inspire love and discourage hate? I know that most atheists (in the Christianized West) choose love over hate. That is to be applauded. But if human beings are accidents in an unknowing universe, how can the decision to love or hate be anything more than a preference, a product of feelings?" *Life of Jesus*, 70.

## Weekly Schedule Week 35

### Thursday-Saturday

Read and Pray the text.  
Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

Work through the provided notes.

### Monday-Tuesday

Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.

### Wednesday

At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.

### Additional Resources:

Listen to Dr. Bob Utley preach on John 15:18-27. What do you think about what he had to say on this text?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvAj21z1Fq0>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**15:20** - "Remember what I told you" (Gk. *mnemoneute tou logou ou ego eipon umin*). Literally, "remember the word which I told you." Idiomatic reference to his previous teaching. Don't overanalyze "the word" in this passage.

**15:20** - "Servant" (Gk. *doulos*). Or can be translated: "a slave." He is continuing the thoughts of 15:15 and 13:16.

**15:24** - "The works" (Gk. *erga*). Jesus returns to the testimony of the works he performs as he did in John 5:36.

**15:25** - "They hated me without reason." Quoted from Psalm 35:19 and Psalm 69:4.

**15:26** - "Advocate" (Gk. *paraklete*). Or "counselor" or "Helper." See notes on John 14:16 for a more full exegesis of this term.

**16:1** - "Fall away" (Gk. *skandalidzw*). Or "turn away." Idiomatic, literally, "to cause to trip."

**16:2** - "synagogue." The court of the Jewish people. See notes from 6:59.

## Theme

**The World** - John uses the term "kosmos" translated "the world" or "this world" in his account of the Gospel more than all of the other Gospel accounts combined *and doubled!* Over fifty percent of the NT usage of this word comes from John. John has something to say about the world and one should be careful to listen to John's use of world without hastily applying the other NT uses upon it. What does *John* mean when he says "world?"

- ❖ With Jesus God created the world he loves (1:10; 3:16; 16:28; 17:5).
- ❖ Yet, the world has a specifically human orientation throughout John. For example, "he [Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him." Surely, it was not the rocks and trees that didn't recognize Jesus. Rather, it was humanity. Similarly, in John 3:19 "light has come into the world, but *people* loved darkness." See also John 7:4, 7; 8:12, 26; 9:39; 12:19, 31, 47; 14:17, 19, 22, 27, 31; 15:18, 19; 16:8, 20).
- ❖ Though the world has been created by God it has been corrupted and now hates the one who created it. "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first" (John 15:18).
- ❖ Jesus has come into this corrupted world to save it. "I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). See also 1:9-10; 3:16-19; 6:14; 10:36; 11:27; 12:46; 16:28; 17:18-23; 18:37.
- ❖ The way in which Jesus saves the world is through giving over his life into the hands of the world (1:29; 3:16; 6:51).
- ❖ There is a prince of this corrupted world that is opposed to Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the disciples (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).
- ❖ Yet, the dark world and the power of the prince of this world has been overcome through the resurrection of Jesus (John 16:33).

## Devotional Thoughts John 15:18-16:4

### Persecution in America

"Many of our Christian brothers and sisters in other parts of the world suffer persecution today. In our own country, suffering for the faith is still not so overt as to be an issue of primary concern. Still, we may sometimes wonder if the reason why Christians in the United States do not suffer more is because they do not clearly and openly identify with Christ. Evangelical Christianity has developed into an almost self-contained, self-sustaining subculture, complete with Christian bookstores, TV and radio stations, Christian celebrities, be it pastors of megachurches or best-selling authors, and the list could go on and on... Many Christians live in a cocoon that enables them to go through life almost completely insulated, without ever having to deal with non-Christians. Yet as a result, we frequently fail to fulfill the function of salt and light in our culture. We must remember Jesus' warning that salt, once it has lost its saltiness, is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men (Mt. 5:13). In our highly pluralistic, postmodern culture, it will be increasingly unpopular to proclaim the biblical message that 'there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved' but Jesus (the message of Peter and John in Acts 4:12). We will be labeled as intolerant, mocked as narrow-minded religious bigots, or even suffer social or economic ostracism. Are we willing to suffer socially, economically, or otherwise for our faith?"

Kostenberger, *John*, 163-164.



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 15:18-16:4

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 35

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### Opening Question

- Have you ever had anybody hate you or at least do something hateful to you?

### In the Word: Read John 15:18-16:4

- In 15:14-15 Jesus modifies the status of the disciples to friends. Why do you think he does this?
- Throughout chapter fifteen, what do you see as the relationship in Jesus' teaching between friendship, love and hate?
- According to this passage, why will the friends of Jesus be hated?
- What do verses 22 and 24 mean?

### In Our Walk

- How do we sometimes cause people to hate us as Christians while honoring God?
- How do we sometimes cause people to hate us as Christians while dishonoring God?
- What are some qualifications for finding it acceptable to be hated as Christians?
- If you found out someone hated you for being a Christian, what would you do?

### In Greater Depth

- Read verse 20 again. Now read the quote from Kosternberg under "Devotional thoughts in"
  - Do you think we face persecution for being a Christian in this country?
    - Why or why not?
  - "Are we willing to suffer socially, economically, or otherwise for our faith?"

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we be people who resemble Jesus even if it leads to the world hating us?



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 16:5-15}

## Notes:

### Background

**The Paraklete** - In the notes on John 14:16 it was proposed that the best translation of “paraklete” is advocate as many modern translations use due to the Greco-Roman background of the word and its correlation with John’s trial motif. It should be no surprise that as John returns to the trial motif in Jesus’ teaching, the Advocate is once again brought to the forefront. There are four primary dimensions to the Advocate within these verses. First, the Advocate will come when the Son has returned to the Father. This is because the Son must first accomplish the work for which he came (John 9:4; 4:34). Second, the Advocate is responsible for exposing or convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (see notes on other side). Third, the Advocate is directly referred to as the Spirit of Truth. One of the primary, and often overlooked, dimensions of the Holy Spirit is that he guides the disciples into truth. It is important to place yourself into the context of the passage to understand the importance of this point. Jesus is leaving. He is placing the disciples in charge of proclaiming what he has taught. Although the disciples have been with him three years, they have still struggled to understand some of the principles of his teaching. Yet, they are not alone in their proclamation. Jesus says the Spirit of Truth will guide them and this guidance will be spoken guidance (16:13). The disciples who are attentive and receptive to the Holy Spirit *will* honor the Son because the Spirit knows how to honor the Son (16:14). Finally, this passage gives insight into the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Jesus correlates his relationship with the Father (who sent him) to his relationship with the Spirit (who he is sending). Just as Jesus has received his message from the Father (John 10:18) so the Spirit will receive his message from the Son. Just as the Father and the Son are one, so also the Spirit is one with the Father and the Son. Likewise, just as the Father dwells with the Son, so the Father and the Son dwell with the Spirit. Thus, when the disciples receive the Advocate they are receiving the indwelling presence of the Father and the Son.

## Weekly Schedule Week 36

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.  
Follow the Lectio Divina, if  
needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided  
notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers,  
thoughts, or even your own  
commentary on the text. Work  
through the devotional thoughts  
on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in  
group discussion over the text.**

**Additional Resources:  
Listen to Praise and Harmony  
sing “Holy Spirit, Breathe on Me.”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHH5MurHLUk>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 16:5** - *"None of you asks me, 'where are you going?'"* Previously both Peter (John 13:36) and Thomas (John 14:5) have asked where Jesus is going. Yet, they no longer ask that questions because they are so filled with grief over what they have just heard (16:6)
- 16:6** - *"Grief"* (Gk. *lupe*). Or "sorrow" or "distress." Their response shows contrast to Jesus teaching to not be worried (14:1).
- 16:7** - *"The Advocate"* (Gk. *paraklete*). Or "Counselor" or "Helper." See notes on John 14:16.
- 16:8** - *"he comes"* (Gk. *elthwn ekeivos*). Literally, "that one comes."
- 16:10** - *"righteousness"* (Gk. *diakosune*). John hardly ever talks about righteousness, but it appears this specifically refers to the way Jesus is proved righteous through returning to the Father following the resurrection. Despite what the world thought, Jesus was truly righteous.

## Theology

**Yet to Come** - Jesus says specifically that the Holy Spirit will announce what is "yet to come" (John 16:13). Scholars are divided over what this refers to, but there are three non-exclusive probabilities. First, the Spirit could be speaking about the final days in Jesus second-coming including judgment, eternal life, etc. Second, the Spirit could be announcing the nature or character of the Christian life following the death and resurrection of Jesus. In other words, he is announcing what Christian life is all about to the believers through the inspiring of Scripture, organizing of the church, and working of signs. Third, the Spirit could be announcing the nature of the persecution that the disciples are bound to face. Though this is more broadly contextually relevant (see John 15:18-16:4) it seems a little narrow for the more immediate context of John 16:12-15.

## Background

**Prove the World to be in the Wrong** - The verb that is translated "prove to be in the wrong" is one word in Greek: "elencw." The actor of this verb is the Holy Spirit. There are three major possibilities of interpretation. First, it can mean to convict or convince someone of something. Second, it can mean to expose something or bring something to light. Finally, it can mean to correct or punish someone. The last meaning can be ruled out as it doesn't fit the context, which leaves either of the first two meanings. The first meaning seems to correlate better with the trial motif in the gospel and with the first point, "sin" but isn't as natural with the second and third points, "righteousness" and "judgment." Similarly, John's motif of light and darkness points towards the second interpretation, which also fits well with all three points. Likewise, the same word is used in John 3:20. Thus, the Holy Spirit exposes sin, righteousness, and judgment.

## Devotional Thoughts John 16:5-15

### Convict the World

I was once at a conference on personal evangelism where the speaker said the first thing you had to do to share the good news of Jesus was to teach people that they were sinners. That thought has always bugged me and I think Jesus has something to say about it from this text. According to Jesus, it is the role of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He goes on to specifically expand each of these elements. The Advocate will convict people that sin originates in not believing that Jesus is who he claims to be (15:9). He will convict the world that Jesus was righteous based in his resurrection and return to the Father (15:10). Finally, he will convict that real judgment is coming because the prince of this world has already been condemned through the resurrection and defeat of death. I find it difficult to tell people they are sinning or, even more difficult, determining if people are sinning when the sin is vague. If my first role as an evangelist is to convince someone they are sinning, as the man at the conference said, then I better be confident I know their sins. How am I supposed to do that when I can't possibly know a person's heart!?

There is great relief in allowing the Holy Spirit to be in charge of the things he is responsible for. He is the one who convicts the world of sin and he is way better at it than I will ever be! Now at times he might use me to do that, but, first and foremost, my calling as a disciple is love.





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 16:5-15

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 36

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### Opening Question

- When is a time in your life you felt convicted about something?

### In the Word: Read John 16:5-15

- Where is Jesus going?
  - Why don't the disciples ask where he is going anymore?
  - Why is it for the disciples good that Jesus is leaving?
- What three concepts does Jesus say the Holy Spirit will convict the world of in verse 8?
  - He expands his teaching on each of these concepts individually in verses 9-11. How does each teaching correspond with its related concept?
- How would you describe the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit?

### In Our Walk

- According to these verses, why do we need the Holy Spirit?
- In what ways do we struggle to allow the Holy Spirit to do his job in our world?
  - Would you agree or disagree with this statement: "There is more freedom and joy in my Christian walk when I allow the Holy Spirit to do his job." Why or why not?

### In Greater Depth

- In verse 13, the Holy Spirit will announce what is "yet to come."
  - What are the three options provided in the notes?
  - What other possibilities might there be?
  - What do you think the "yet to come" is?

### Closing Prayer

- Praise God for sending the Holy Spirit into our lives! Pray specifically for ways you would like the Holy Spirit to work in your life or the lives of others.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 16:16-33}

## Notes:

### Background

**The Farewell Discourse** - John 13-17 is a specific form of Greco-Roman and Jewish literature or oratory referred to as a farewell discourse. "The farewell discourse is a literary form known in classical, biblical and pseudepigraphical material. The form exists as a part of larger works and as independent pieces of literature generally called 'testaments.' The story of the death of Socrates in Plato's *Phaedo* and his final discussion with his students became the model for death scenes in classical literature. In biblical literature we can find similar addresses attributed to Jacob (Gen 48-49), Moses (Deut 31-34), Joshua (Josh 23-24), and David (1 Chron 28-29). In the NT we can see this form in Luke 22, John 13-17, and Acts 20:17-38. The popularity of this genre in biblical and extrabiblical literature is easy to understand. The farewell scene of the great leader gave the writer an opportunity to summarize the achievements and teaching of that person, developing an apology for the life of the person if needed and applying the lessons of the person's life to the problems facing future generations... The purpose of the farewell discourse is always to teach and to instruct... The typical structure of a farewell discourse can be summarized:

- ❖ Reference to approaching death
- ❖ Gathering of family or disciples
- ❖ Review of the figure's life
- ❖ Exhortation
- ❖ Prediction or prophecies
- ❖ Blessings, final prayer or final warnings
- ❖ Death and burial

The order of these items is not inflexible. Structural parts may be repeated or completely omitted... Frequently, but not always, the figure will commission his sons/disciples to carry on his work or will name a successor."

R. W. Paschal, Jr., "Farewell Discourse" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel Green, 229-230.

## Weekly Schedule Week 37

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch this compilation of babies laughing to remember what the joy of the resurrection is like:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgGMJg wz8uM>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**16:16** - "You will see me." Routinely throughout this portion of dialogue Jesus tells the disciples that they will again see him after a little while.

Some scholars have argued that this is a reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit, but it is much more likely it is simply a reference to Jesus' post-resurrection appearances as in John 14:19.

**16:19** - "asking" (Gk. *zetew*). Literally, "seeking." This could be a continuation of the seeking motif in John, but it might also just be the standard way to say "asking."

**16:20-21** - "grief, has pain" (Gk. *lupe, lupew*). There is a wordplay in the Greek that is hard to recreate in English. The word the NIV translates as grieve in v. 20 and throughout these verses is the same word that describes the woman's pain in labor.

**16:21, 25, 32** - "time" (Gk. *wra*). Literally, "hour."

**16:25, 29** - "speaking figuratively" (Gk. *paroimiai*). Or "in parables" or "in metaphors." This might be traditionally translated as parables except Jesus has not spoken in parables in John. Thus, the idea in John is more along the lines of lofty speech currently veiled.

**16:32** - "home." Literally, "each to his own." The word home is not in the Greek.

## Background

**Birth Pains** - Jesus has used very little symbolic language throughout his farewell address. Yet, in v. 21 he uses the imagery of a mother giving birth whose pain is intense for a short time but brings lasting joy. This was a common analogy in the ancient world. It is used throughout the Old Testament (Psalm 48:6; Isa 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; 42:14; Jer 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 30:6; 31:8; 48:41; 49:22, 24; 50:43; Hos 13:13) and in the New Testament (Matt 24:8; 1 Thess 5:3; Romans 8:22). It is especially apt in the present circumstance as many ancients considered labor as bringing a mother near to the point of death.

**Isaiah 66** - Isaiah 66:8-14, or more broadly all of Isaiah 66 appears to be the primary background of the closing section of Jesus farewell address in 16:16-33 for at least three reasons. First, v. 22 is a direct allusion to Isaiah 66:14. Second, the labor imagery of v. 21 correlates to the same imagery found in Isaiah 66:7. Third, Jesus' final statement concerning overcoming the world is an underlying but explicit theme throughout Isaiah 66. Jesus appears to be reinterpreting the painful anticipation and hopeful expectation of Isaiah 66 through his own forthcoming death, burial, and resurrection. God will bring the disciples through their time of labor. Though the birth pains (grief at Jesus crucifixion) will be intense so also will be their joy at the new birth (the resurrection of Jesus). At that time, God will bring forth his new nation in a day (Isa 66:8) and those who tremble at his word (66:5) will rejoice (66:5, 10) and bring the Father honor (66:5).

## Devotional Thoughts John 16:16-33

### Farewell Discourse

This week college football has started up in full swing. One of the more interesting stories leading up to this season came from Ole Miss head coach, Hugh Freeze, who staged his own mock funeral as motivation for his players. This might seem a bit over the top till you listen to his point. He said, "the whole purpose is understanding whatever you believe drives your behaviors... We need to work backward. You need to say, 'this is the result I really want, now are my beliefs and my behaviors going to get me that result.'" It might seem a bit morbid, but Mr. Freeze is on to something. In John 13-17, Jesus has his farewell discourse in which he lays out the driving beliefs of his life. Summarized, Jesus says in 16:28, "I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." All of Jesus' actions and motivation in his life came out of this primary belief. Tied innately to this summary belief statement is the immediately preceding statement that defines his disciples' principle beliefs. Jesus says, "the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God."

If you were to hold a mock funeral for yourself what would you want people to say about you? Would the qualities that have defined your life stem out of the love the Father has for you and your belief that Jesus came from the Father?

How do we "work backwards" from this core belief?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 16:16-33

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 37

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### Opening Question

- What is one thing you would want people to say about you at your funeral?

### In the Word: Read John 16:16-33

- What does Jesus mean in verse 16?
  - Why are the disciples so confused about this question?
- What are the reasons the disciples should have joy according to Jesus in John 16:16-33?
- What does Jesus mean that he has overcome the world?
- This text is the end of Jesus' farewell address, which runs from John 13-16. What has Jesus accentuated during this farewell address?
  - If you were to say there was one central point to John 13-16 what would it be? *This will probably be different for different people.*

### In Our Walk

- Why is joy such an important part of the Christian life?
- Why do you think we as Christians struggle so often to be joyful?
  - What things have you done in your Christian walk that have helped you be a more joyful Christian?

### In Greater Depth

- Read Isaiah 66. This appears to be the background to Jesus' farewell address in John.
  - What similarities do you see between Isaiah 66 and John 16:16-33?
  - In what way does knowing and understanding Isaiah 66 help you understand what Jesus is saying in his farewell address?

### Closing Prayer

- Praise God for victory that overcomes the world! Pray that we might be people more full of joy as we express God's love for us!



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 17:1-5}

## Notes: Theology

**Eternal Life** - Knowing his disciples were within ear shot, Jesus defines life eternal in his prayer. "It is not just unending life in the sense of prolonged duration. Rather it is a quality of life, with its quality derived from a relationship with God. Having eternal life is here defined as being in relationship with the Father, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom the Father sent. Christ... is not characteristically attached to Jesus' name in John's Gospel; it occurs elsewhere primarily as a title and is used with Jesus' name only in 1:17. But that is connected to its use here: The statement here in 17:3 enables us to correlate the statement made in 1:18 of the prologue, that Jesus has fully revealed what God is like, with Jesus' statement in 10:10 that he has come that people might have life, and have it abundantly. These two purposes are really one, according to 17:3, because (abundant) eternal life is defined as knowing (being in relationship with) the Father and the Son. The only way to gain this eternal life, that is, to obtain this knowledge of the Father, is through the Son (cf. 14:6)." *NET Bible*, John 17:3, 8

## For the Non-Believer

"Man, this is the good life!" I can still hear my good hunting buddy proclaim these words as we paused for lunch after chasing elk through the mountains all morning. I nodded my head in agreement but later started thinking more about this. We all have something in life we love to do: drive fast cars, enjoy a hot cup of coffee, quilt, watch a great movie, etc. Admittedly, in our time spent doing these things they feel like the good life but their goodness seems so fleeting, just as the elk bugle's were fleeting that morning with my hunting buddy. Is there a good life that isn't as fleeting as the elements we think make it good? Jesus says there is. Jesus says that not only is there the good life but it is eternally good! In other words, there is no end to the good life he promises. What then is this good life? The right house, hobby, or friends? Jesus says that life is to know God as the only true God and to know Jesus himself as the one that was sent by God. Jesus contends that only a relationship with God allows for truly experiencing the good life.

## Weekly Schedule Week 38

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch a reenactment of the Jesus prayer from the Gospel of John movie.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgfamotdZck>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**17:1** - "Looked toward heaven" (Gk. Literally, "lifted his eyes." The word for heaven "ouranos" is also the word for heaven. Don't read too deep into this text; the idea is simply that Jesus began to pray in standard Jewish style.

**17:2** - "people" (Gk. *sarks*). Literally, "all flesh."

**17:3** - "Now this" (Gk. *jauth de*). When attempting to accentuate a point John commonly uses the phrase "jauth de," which is sometimes translated "now this" (John 1:19; 3:19; 15:12).

**17:4** - "Christ" (Gk. *christou*). Literally, "the anointed one." It is not typical for John to use this expression for Jesus but the context appears to warrant such a title.

**17:5** - "In your presence" (Gk. *para*). Or "in your presence," or "with yourself." This points directly back to John 1:1 in which the "word was with God."

## Theology

**Authority** - In John 17:2, Jesus reminds those listening that all authority has been given from the Father to the Son. This handing over of authority comes out of the love the Father has for the Son. "The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands" (John 3:35). "Concerning Jesus' authority John has already noted that God has entrusted to him the authority to judge (5:27). Also, Jesus has the authority to lay down his life and to take it up again (10:18). Matthew makes clear that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus (Mt 28:18). Jesus, the Son of Man who is about to be glorified and thus fulfill his earthly mission, here anticipates his exalted, authoritative position subsequent to his crucifixion and resurrection. This authority enables him to bestow eternal life on all those God has given him." Kostenberger, *John*, 169.

## Theme

**Hour** - As has been traced throughout the notes, the motif of Jesus' hour is prevalent throughout the Gospel of John (2:1-4; 4:21-23; 5:25-28; 7:30; 8:20; 13:1). Throughout his ministry, Jesus' hour had not yet arrived until John 12:20-29 when Jesus finally announces that his hour has come. In John 12:20-19, Jesus also shows the innate connection between his hour and the honor (or glory) that is coming to him. Jesus returns to this theme in his very first words in John 17:1 to start the climactic final prayer of his farewell address. Once again, the arrival of the Son's hour coincides with the mutual honoring of the Son and the Father. Though this is a familiar motif in John's Gospel, it's stark contrast to the way of the world should not be underappreciated. The mutual honoring of the Father and the Son comes through the brutal hour of the crucifixion. The way of God's honor is through the shame of the cross.

## Devotional Thoughts John 16:16-33

### Christian Heresy

Though Paul obviously dealt with detractors and Judaizers during his ministry, the first major controversy in the history of the church began around the year 200 AD and was over the nature of Christ. A belief called Docetism (from the Greek word *dokei* "to appear") crept into popularity through the reading of the apocryphal Gospel of Peter. Initially, Bishop Serapion of Antioch allowed the view but upon further review he denied the validity of both Docetism and the Gospel of Peter. Docetism argued that Jesus did not actually take on human form. Rather, he only appeared to be human. During this time the view of Adoptionism also grew to prominence. It argued that the human being Jesus was adopted as the Son of God at his conception, baptism, or resurrection. These different views were refuted as heresy by the council of Nicea in 326 AD. *So who cares?*

Well many contemporary theologians have noticed a new ambivalence in American Evangelical Christianity concerning this important issue, which has led to many Christians unknowingly holding a position of Adoptionism or Docetism. I once was studying with a young man that had been going to a large church for a few years and he had no clue that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. The nature of Christ is important to us for a few reasons, but, first, because it was important to John (John 1:1; 8:58; 17:5). What are some other reasons a proper understanding of the nature of Christ is important for our faith?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 17:1-5

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 38

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### Opening Question

- When was a moment in your life that seemed like time stood still or went by too fast?

### In the Word: Read John 17:1-5

- What does Jesus mean “the hour has come?”
  - In what way has “hour” been significant in the Gospel of John? *If needed, you can read John 2:4; 4:21-23; 5:25; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23-27; 13:1.*
- How does Jesus describe eternal life?
  - In what way has “eternal life” been significant in the Gospel of John? *If needed, you can read John 3:15-16; 3:36; 4:14; 4:36; 5:24; 5:39; 6:40-54; 10:28; 12:50.*

### In Our Walk

- The final use of “hour” and “eternal life” in the Gospel of John occurs here together. What relationship is there between Jesus’ hour and eternal life?
  - “For Jesus, the finite hour is the tangible expression of infinite life.” What does this mean?
  - How do we allow eternal life to define our every hour?

### In Greater Depth

- The phrase “eternal life” is literally translated “life of the ages.” It refers to the two age time understanding of Jews in which the current age held suffering, pain, and rule by other nations. Yet, in the age to come God would rule supreme and there would be no more suffering or pain. How does this help us understand what Jesus means by “life of the ages?”
  - What is the difference between eternal life being a statement of quality rather than quantity?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray this text as a prayer to God from us.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 17:6-19}

## Notes:

### Motif

**Sanctify** - Jesus concludes the portion of his prayer concerning his current disciples with the plea that the Father will “sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” Sanctify means “to be set apart” or “to be made holy.” The holiness of God’s chosen people is one of the foundational concerns of God throughout the entire biblical narrative. As Moses receives the covenant from God in Exodus 19, God says to the Israelites, “you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (v. 6). God’s people had to be holy because God himself was holy (Lev. 11:44). Thus, his people’s holiness allowed for two things. First, God could dwell with them because a holy God can only dwell with a holy people. God’s heart has always been to be with his people and only through his people’s holiness could this take place. Second, the holiness of God’s people allowed them to do the work of displaying his holiness to the world. All of these holiness motifs are found in Jesus’ prayer. First, the holiness of God’s name is at stake (see notes on backside). Second, the disciples were chosen by God for this purpose (v. 6). Third, they are separate from the world just as the holy God is set apart (v. 14). Fourth, they are sent for a holy purpose, a holy work (v. 19). How does this happen? Only in the sanctifying work of Christ (v. 19). Though Jesus has already been made holy by God (John 10:36), the disciples will only be made holy through the sanctifying work of Jesus in the cross (v. 19).

### For the Non-Believer

John was the last of Jesus’ disciples to recount and record his account of the good news of Jesus. In his recollection of Jesus’ prayer, he remembers Jesus specifically petitioning God to “keep” all of the disciples in the same way that Jesus during his time on earth “kept” all of his disciples (17:11-12). Jesus specifically recalls that “none has been lost.” During Jesus’ ministry and immediately after, not a single first generation of Christians denied what they had witnessed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Even though many of them were tortuously killed for their belief in Jesus. I think this says a lot about the historical validity of Jesus’ life and teaching.

## Weekly Schedule Week 39

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Watch The Bible Projects wonderful “Animated Explanation of God’s Holiness.”**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9vn5UvsHvM>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**17:6** - "you" (Gk. *sou to onoma*). Literally, "your name." See notes.

**17:10** - "glory" (Gk. *doxew*). Can also be translated "honored."

**17:11, 12, 15** - "protect them" (Gk. *tereson autous*). Literally, "keep them."

Scholars translate this in the sense of protect them or keep them safe. Yet, the term "keep" has been used throughout the Gospel in relationship to the disciples "keeping" Jesus' word or command (17:6).

**17:12** - "doomed to destruction." Literally, "'the son of destruction' (a Semitic idiom for one appointed for destruction; here it is a reference to Judas). The one destined to destruction refers to Judas. Clearly in John's Gospel Judas is portrayed as a tool of Satan. He is described as "the devil" in 6:70. In 13:2 Satan put into Judas' heart the idea of betraying Jesus, and 13:27 Satan himself entered Judas. Immediately after this Judas left the company of Jesus and the other disciples and went out into the realm of darkness (13:30). Cf. 2 Thess 2:3, where this same Greek phrase ("the son of destruction"; see tn above) is used to describe the man through whom Satan acts to rebel against God in the last days." *NET BIBLE*, John 17:12, 41.

**17:17, 19** - "sanctify" (Gk. *agiadz*). Literally, "made holy" or "made set apart." This word derives from the word for holy in the Greek. Sanctified means "to be made holy."

## Background

**Your name** - In John 17:6, Jesus begins the portion of his prayer for his disciples by saying, "I have revealed your name." The significance of this statement is often overlooked by modern readers and the NIV even goes as far to not include "name." Yet, in Jewish prayers the holiness of the name of God was pivotal. For example, in Ezekiel 36 God says multiple times he is coming to act "not for your sake... but for the sake of my holy name" (v. 22). When Jesus prays to the Father, "I have revealed your name," he is petitioning God to act on behalf of keeping God's name holy because Jesus has perfectly revealed his name to the disciples. Thus, he asks God to keep the disciples for the sake of God's holy name.

## Theology

**Characteristics of Discipleship** - Jesus prays specifically for those who are currently his disciples in this second section of his prayer. In v. 6-9 he testifies to God about four defining characteristics of his disciples.

1. They obeyed the word.
2. They know that everything the Father has given the Son comes from the Father.
3. They accepted the words of the Son given by the Father.
4. They believed that the Father sent the Son.

## Devotional Thoughts John 17:6-19

### Going Away

"In the newspapers recently a mother was punished by the courts. She had left her two young children entirely by themselves, while she went off for a foreign holiday with her new boyfriend... It is hard to believe that a mother could do such a thing. One wonders what she thought she would find when she got home... But supposing she herself had had loving parents who were only too glad to look in after the children while she was away! That would have made all the difference. She could have entrusted the little ones to them, safe in the knowledge that they would care for them as much as she did. One can imagine a mother in that situation giving her parents detailed instructions as to how each child should be looked after, not because she didn't trust her parents to look after them but because she did. What Jesus now prays grows out of the fact that he is going away. He is entrusting the disciples to the father he has known and loved throughout his own earthly life, the father who, he knows, will care for them every bit as much as he has done himself." (Wright, *John*, 112). When is a time you have trusted someone with something very important? What directions did you give them? What does Jesus ask God to do for his disciples? How does that reveal Jesus' heart?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 17:6-19

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 39

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### Opening Question

- When is a time in your life you have had to trust someone with your kids, pets, or something else special to you?

### In the Word: Read John 17:6-19

- Jesus begins this section of the prayer by saying, “I have revealed your name...” How does this statement serve as the foundation for the rest of this section of his prayer?
- Who does Jesus pray for in this passage?
  - What are the different elements of his prayer for them?
- Jesus describes four characteristics of disciples in verses 6-9. What are these characteristics and why are they important?
- How would you define sanctification?
  - In what diverse ways do you see holiness talked about in Jesus’ prayer?
  - How does Jesus use holiness to accomplish his mission?

### In Our Walk

- We often forget in reading these passages that we are listening to Jesus’ prayer to his Father. In a sense, we are overhearing a private conversation. How does this prayer reveal Jesus’ heart?
  - How does Jesus’ prayer differ from our own prayers?
  - Based upon what you’ve read so far in chapter 17, how might you pray differently?

### Closing Prayer

- Based upon Jesus’ prayer, offer a prayer for discipleship and sanctification.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 17:20-26}

## Notes: Theme

**Oneness** - If one were to summarize this section of Jesus' prayer with one word it would be unity or oneness. Throughout the Gospel, John has adamantly taught that Jesus and the Father are the same (John 1:1-3, 18; 3:35-36; 5:19-21; 6:43-51; 8:19, 58). Though this theme is subtly prominent throughout the Gospel, it comes visibly to the forefront in the good shepherd discourse of John 10 where Jesus says bluntly, "I and the Father are one" (10:30). Jesus takes this unity even further by petitioning the Father to bring all believers into the unity the Father and Son have together (17:21). This unity has four components according to Jesus. First, the believers are one with the Father and Son "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (17:21). Unity of the believers is central to belief in Jesus. Second, Jesus has given the disciples glory in order that they might be one (17:22). On their own, disciples of Jesus could never be honorable enough to join the relationship of the Father and the Son. This only happens through Christ. Third, the world will recognize the love of God through the disciples' unity (17:23). Love and unity go hand in hand for Jesus. God's love is familial and the unity of family displays the love of the Father. Finally, Jesus is petitioning the Father for this unity! It is not the job of the disciples to be unified. Only the Father can do that. We don't answer Jesus' prayer, only God does.

## For the Non-Believer

Sometimes the message of Christians gets muddled in the deep waters of Christian theology. According to this passage, Jesus desires three things *for (not from)* you. First, that you will know that God loves you as much as he loves his only son (John 17:23). Second, that you will be with Jesus in relationship with the loving God. Third, that you will see the honor of Jesus given to him because God loves him. When we see the honor of Jesus we can recognize all that God desires to give us because he loves us. God's desire has never been to impose burdensome rules and regulations with no meaning. Instead, his desire has always been to love you, bring you in close, and give you everlasting honor.

## Weekly Schedule Week 40

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to or read the wonderful and prophetic sermon by Martin Luther King Jr. entitled, "Paul's Letter to American Christians."**

[http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documents/try/doc\\_pauls\\_letter\\_to\\_american\\_christians/](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documents/try/doc_pauls_letter_to_american_christians/)

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**17:20** - "will believe" (Gk. *pisteuontwn*). Though this word is a present participle, the context forces a future translation. This is allowable for Greek participles. Thus, the best translation is "those who will believe."

**17:20** - "message" (Gk. *logos*). Literally, "their word." Though message or testimony is an adequate translation of the idea, there is a consistent theme of word throughout the Gospel of John that is missed in these translations. The word will continue to provoke belief through the disciples.

**17:26** - "you" (Gk. *sou* to *onoma*). Literally, "your name." The significance of this statement is often overlooked by modern readers and the NIV even goes as far to not include "name." Yet, in Jewish prayers the holiness of the name of God was pivotal. For example, in Ezekiel 36 God says multiple times he is coming to act "not for your sake... but for the sake of my holy name" (v. 22). When Jesus prays to the Father, "I have revealed your name," he is petitioning God to act on behalf of keeping God's name holy.

## Background & Theology

**Unity** - In Contemporary Western culture the desire for unity or oneness is a standard virtue. Even in the state of current politics, a common plea is "to reach across party lines" and "to work together for the good of America." In the Roman world, "Writers and speakers emphasized the need for unity for the state, armies, for families, and so forth... [Yet,] personal enmity was standard in partisan politics but also extended to matters such as favored teachers and literary competition" (Keener, 1062). Still, social and ethnic boundaries was the greatest dimension of disunity in the ancient world and, even philosophers and writers often supported these divides for the upholding of society. Yet, Jesus teaches that God's love breaks down even these social and ethnic divisions as John has portrayed in the narrative of the Samaritan Woman (4:39-42), the healing of the man born blind (John 9:1-12), and the Good Shepherd discourse (John 10:1-21).

**Outreach in Unity** - "Unity (together with love) constitutes an essential prerequisite for evangelism. Outreach to unbelievers is rooted in the community of believers as a whole rather than being the isolated enterprise of individuals who have the gift of evangelism. This realization has come to the fore once again in the present postmodern climate, which accentuates the subjective nature of knowledge and truth. In such an atmosphere, it is very difficult to reason someone into the kingdom by mere rational argument. Rather, the unbeliever must first be brought into the community of believers where he or she can experience unified and loving relationships among Christians (Kostenberger, 172).

## Devotional Thoughts John 17:6-19

### Our Final Destiny

Jean Vanier who founded the L'Arche communities for those with intellectual or learning disabilities reflects on the heart of John 17. He writes in his work *The Gospel of John, The Gospel of Relationships*, "finally we come to chapter 17 of John, which is a soft of summit of the Gospel. It is a prayer for the unity of humanity, unity for which we were made. The prologue [John 1] is the descent of the Word into flesh, into the flesh of Mary. Chapter 17 is the return of Jesus to the Father with all his friends, with all humanity. It is with all men and women together that Jesus yearns to return to the Father. The great longing of the Father, one with Jesus, is to live in community with all men and women. 'I pray, Father, that you in me, and I in you, and they in us, will all be perfectly one,' prays Jesus. God longs that we will all be perfectly one in him and with him for his glory and the glory and joy of all creation."

How does it change your perspective on Christian unity to understand that we are unified in the relationship the Father and the Son have with one another?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 17:20-26

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 40

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### Opening Question

- If you could pray for one thing for the church what would it be? Why?

### In the Word: Read John 17:20-26

- Who is Jesus' prayer for in this section?
- There are four things that Jesus specifically prays for in these verses. What are they?
  - How are these four things interrelated?
  - Why does Jesus want these four things for his believers?
- What is the difference between a humanist approach to unity, "if we all stick together we can accomplish...," and the unity Jesus prays for in this passage?

### In Our Walk

- Do you agree or disagree with the statement, "our prayers depict our understanding of God?" Why or why not?
  - If this is a true statement, then how does Jesus' prayer depict his understanding of God? Or, what does God care about according to Jesus?
- How does it change our behavior when we understand God has made us one through the work of his son? Who are we one with?

### To Help Us Share the Good News

- In what ways do we tend to share with people what God desires *from* them before sharing what God desires *for* them?
  - What are the differences in those two approaches?
  - How does it change our attitude in sharing the good news if we begin with what God desires *for* people?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray this text as a prayer to God from us. Reword it as necessary.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 18:1-11}

## Notes:

### Commentary & Background

**They fell down** - Some scholars have suggested that as Jesus initially responded to the soldiers he did so with such abruptness that it caused the already spooked frontline of soldiers to jump backward falling into the next line which resulted in a kind of comedic domino effect. Though slightly humorous, this interpretation appears to miss the more significant theological point John is making. When the soldiers fall to the ground they do so in involuntary reaction to Jesus saying, "I am!" Craig Keener has demonstrated that John has two groups of seven "I am" statements from the mouth of Jesus in the Gospel. The first group includes predicates or explanatory phrases such as "I am the bread of life" (6:35). These are specifically dealing with Jesus function or role in the world (John 6:35, 41, 48; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1). The second set of these "I am" statements are absolute and intended to demonstrate Jesus' identity (4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8). The finale of these statements occurs right here in John 18 as the hour of Jesus has arrived and the soldiers have arrived to arrest him. As the soldiers involuntarily fall to the ground it shows that despite the dark hour when it appears the world will be victorious, God himself is still in control.

**Kidron Valley** - A valley on the eastern side of the Old city of Jerusalem which separates the Mount of Olives from the Temple Mount. The Kidron was a seasonal creek that only flowed during the rainy season. Jesus commonly moved through this valley on his way towards Bethany.

### For the Non-Believer

**"I Have Not Lost One"** - Last week, we talked about all the good things Jesus longs for you to have: peace, love, and relationship with him. In this week's scripture Jesus promises something else remarkable: That he will keep all those that the Father has given him. For those who commit their lives to being a disciple of Jesus, he promises to never lose them! You are so important to God that God's only Son promises God he will never lose you.

## Weekly Schedule Week 41

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

**Additional Resources:**  
**Watch this section of scripture from The Gospel of John available on Youtube.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6pIMJRtp\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6pIMJRtp_8)

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 18:1** - “when he had finished praying” (Gk. *tauta eipwn*). This appears to be a transitional phrase to indicate the end of the farewell discourse, which runs from John 13-17.
- 18:1** - “garden” (Gk. *kepos*). Also could be translated, “orchard.” Based upon geographical context it most likely refers to a tended olive orchard.
- 18:3** - “detachment of soldiers” (Gk. *speiran*). Literally, “cohort.” See notes.
- 18:3** - “lanterns” (Gk. *lampas*). By the time of Jesus, this word had a technical sense referring to a torch that was covered and designed for outside use.
- 18:4, 7** - “you want” (Gk. *zetew*). Literally, “who are you seeking.” See motif notes.
- 18:5,6, 8** - “I am he” (Gk. *ego eimi*). Literally, “I am.” This is a normal response to a question of identity. Yet, for the theologically astute reader of the Gospel of John, this phrase always carries more depth.

## Background

**Detachment of Soldiers** - “The word “speiran” is a technical term for a Roman cohort, normally a force of 600 men (one tenth of a legion). It was under the command of a χιλίαρχος (‘ciliarco’, v. 12). Because of the improbability of an entire cohort being sent to arrest a single man, some have suggested that σπεῖραν here refers only to a maniple, a force of 200. But the use of the word here does not necessarily mean the entire cohort was present on this mission, but only that it was the cohort which performed the task (for example, saying the fire department put out the fire does not mean that every fireman belonging to the department was on the scene at the time). These Roman soldiers must have been ordered to accompany the servants of the chief priests and Pharisees by Pilate, since they would have been under the direct command of the Roman prefect or procurator. It is not difficult to understand why Pilate would have been willing to assist the Jewish authorities in such a way. With a huge crowd of pilgrims in Jerusalem for the Passover, the Romans would have been especially nervous about an uprising of some sort. No doubt the chief priests and Pharisees had informed Pilate that this man Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah, or in the terms Pilate would understand, king of Israel.” *NET Bible*, John 18:3.

## Theme

**Who do you seek?** - John has already specifically stated that Jesus knew all things, so then why does Jesus ask this stark question, *twice!*? In John’s gospel this has been a formative question since it was first muttered by Jesus himself to some lingering disciples in John 1:38. It was given considerable attention in John six and has reached its climax in this usage. The world seeks to kill Jesus but disciples seek to dwell with Jesus (See also (1:38; 4:23, 27; 5:30, 44; 6:24, 26).

## Devotional Thoughts John 18:1-11

### Peter’s Sword

Peter was one of Jesus’ closest disciples and friends. He loved Jesus and had even told Jesus specifically that he would lay down his life for Jesus (John 13:37). So it is no surprise that when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, Peter swung his sword at the one in charge (the high priest) and cut off his ear! Of course, he did this to protect his teacher, his friends, and his Lord. One would think Jesus would applaud his loyalty and bravery. Yet, Jesus did no such thing. Instead he chastised Peter in front of everyone. “PUT YOUR SWORD AWAY!” There are two reasons why Jesus reprimanded Peter. The first is not explicit in John’s text, but is explicit in the occurrence of this event in Matthew. The way of Jesus is not the way of violence as Jesus makes clear in Matthew 26:51-52. Though John could accentuate this point, he chooses instead to accentuate a different point. Peter was reprimanded because he was not allowing Jesus to fulfill the mission that he had been given by God. Jesus says, “Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?” This is not Peter’s battle, nor is it Peter’s mission. It is Jesus’ alone. How often in our life do we try to fight Jesus’ battles? How often do we do this in ways he would never condone?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 18:1-11

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide 41

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### Opening Question

- When is a time you had to do something you really didn't want to do? What was that like?

### In the Word: Read John 18:1-11

- Why do you think Jesus asks the soldiers who they are looking for though he already knows?
  - What is the significance of his response?
  - Why do the soldiers fall down?
- What does Jesus mean when he asks Peter rhetorically, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

### In Our Walk

- Though Peter swinging his sword is a real event, how does it also serve metaphorically in this passage?
  - In what ways do we at times try to aid God with the sword?
  - What would it mean for each of us to drink the cup the Father has given us?

### Digging Deeper

- Verse 9 is a difficult text to understand. Specifically, in this text, how does Jesus keep those given to him?
  - How does this passage relate to John 6:35-40?
  - How can we both be assured of eternal life in Christ and still recognize our free will?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can be people of the cup and not of the sword.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 18:12-27}

## Notes:

### Background

**Judicial Ethics** - Scholars have noticed that many Jewish legal violations took place in the Gospel's accounts of Jesus' trial and execution. Though the number varies from scholar to scholar, we will focus on four main violations of Jewish law that the Sanhedrin was to uphold. First, a trial was only to take place during the daylight (18:28). Second, a trial was not held on the eve of a festival or Sabbath (18:28). Third, the Pharisee's argued that no sentence of condemnation should take place without a full day of deliberation. Fourth, both Jewish and Roman courts were adamant about the need and role of witnesses both for and against the accused. The witnesses would undergo judicial scrutiny and the veracity of the case hinged on their important role. Yet, in John's account there is not a single witness for Jesus and those against Jesus face no scrutiny. Some have argued that these violations disprove the historical authenticity of the crucifixion narrative in the Gospels. Yet, these violations more likely prove the historical authenticity. Why would the Gospel writers knowingly contrive judicial violations if they wanted to create a believable narrative? Instead, the narrative of the trial and crucifixion demonstrates the threat that Jesus had become to the established order of both Roman and Jewish civility. We recall that the Sanhedrin (traditionally holding 71 members) was composed mainly of Sadducee Jews loyal to the Roman empire. The Roman rulers often even selected the members of the Sanhedrin. Though the Pharisees and zealots desired the overthrow of the Roman government in Jerusalem, the Sadducee's attempted to keep peace with the Romans who had treated them graciously since returning to power after the Maccabean revolution. Jesus undoubtedly had Jerusalem and the surrounding regions in political and religious unrest after his multiple miracles and, more specifically, raising Lazarus from the dead (11:45-57). For Annas and Caiaphas, this was an emergency situation which warranted emergency action. Even the Pharisees would support bypassing standard legal procedures in order to force the quick execution of a blasphemer and false prophet.

## Weekly Schedule Week 42

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**For a more extended discussion of the legality of Jesus' trial and crucifixion read Lurna L. Berg, “The Illegalities of Jesus' Religious and Civil Trials.”**

**Available online. Search Lurna L. Berg, Illegalities.**

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**18:15** - "another disciple" (Gk. *allos mathetes*). Scholars are unclear who this disciple is though John sometimes refers to anonymous disciples (6:8; 21:2; maybe 1:37). See notes below.

**18:18** - "charcoal." Only John specifically mentions charcoal, which might be to connect this story with John 21:9. NIV does not include this detail.

**18:22** - "slapped" (Gk. *edwken rapisma*). Literally, "give a blow." Might be a slap or something even more forceful.

**18:24** - "sent him bound to Caiaphas." "Where was Caiaphas the high priest located? Did he have a separate palace, or was he somewhere else with the Sanhedrin? Since Augustine (4th century) a number of scholars have proposed that Annas and Caiaphas resided in different wings of the same palace, which were bound together by a common courtyard through which Jesus would have been led as he was taken from Annas to Caiaphas. This seems a reasonable explanation, although there is no conclusive evidence." *NET Bible*, 18:24, ft. 66.

## Commentary

**Other Disciple** - John says that there was "another disciple" with Peter. We know little about this other disciple other than he had dealings with the High Priest and though he was with Jesus at his arrest he was not accused of being a disciple of Jesus like Peter. There are four major proposals. First, some argue it is "the disciple Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20). Yet, it seems unlikely as John would just have referred to him as the beloved disciple. Second, some propose it is John himself. Yet it seems unlikely that an obscure fisherman from Galilee was known and welcomed in the High Priest's courtyard. Third, some suggest Nicodemus (John 3; 7:50; 19:39). Though Nicodemus would have likely known the high priest, there is no specific mention of him knowing Peter. Finally, some argue that this disciple is actually Judas who would have entered with Jesus and would have known the High Priest. Yet, why would he speak to the doorkeeper on Peter's behalf?

## For the Non-Believer

**It's in the Details** - Throughout John's account of Jesus' trial and crucifixion, he offers many specific and seemingly unimportant details. Not only did Peter cut off the High Priest's servant's ear, he cut off his "right ear" (18:10). Likewise, the slaves and Peter warmed themselves not just at a fire but at a charcoal fire (18:18). The final person who confronted Peter about his association with Jesus was not just a servant of the high priest, he was "a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off" (18:26). There are many other examples of this kind of detail (18:1, 3, 13-14, 15-16, 18, 22, 28; 19:1-3, 13, 17, 20, 25, 29). Why do you think John is so interested in providing these kinds of specific details in this narrative?

## Devotional Thoughts John 18:12-27

### Jesus and Peter

In 18:1-27, John specifically contrasts Jesus and Peter. When the soldiers come to arrest Jesus, Jesus asks him who they are looking for. When they reply "Jesus of Nazareth," he boldly and courageously proclaims "I am he." When they do not act to arrest him, he asks the same question again and they reply "Jesus of Nazareth." Once again, Jesus has the opportunity to deny who he is. Instead he professes, "I told you that I am he," and then he moves to protect those with him in disregard to his own well-being, "let these men go" (18:8). In contrast, when Peter is asked if he is a disciple of Jesus, three different times he denies that he knows Jesus. Whereas, Jesus professes his Lordship to the honor of God and protection of his disciples, Peter denies Jesus to the dishonor of God and to protect his own skin and status. If we are honest with ourselves, is this not in so many ways our relationship with Jesus? How often do we dishonor God by denying Jesus as Lord to protect our own skin or our own status? Yet, through his death and resurrection, Jesus never denies us. The saving and redeeming activity of his crucifixion forever offers redemption in spite of our weakness and failure. And just as Peter is redeemed, so Jesus redeems each of us, but that's for another devotional...





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 18:12-27

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide 42

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### Opening Question

- Have you ever had to appear in court? What for and what was it like?

### In the Word: Read John 18:12-27

- Why does Jesus tell the high priest to ask those who heard him?
  - Why is this so offensive to the high priest?
- What significance is there that Peter denies Jesus three times?
- What specific details does John provide that pop out to you in this text?
  - Why do you think John includes these details?

### In Our Walk

- In 18:1-27, John specifically contrasts Jesus and Peter. As you read through this whole text, how does Peter differ from Jesus?
  - In which ways do we often deny Jesus like Peter?
  - How does social pressure often keep us from acknowledging Jesus?

### Digging Deeper

- Since we are not steeped in Jewish law it is easy for us to miss all of the legal violations that took place within this text according to Jewish and Roman law. Based on your study and the notes, what are the different violations that took place?
  - How does recognizing these violations provide insight into this passage?

### Closing Prayer

- Praise God for the faithfulness of his son!



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 18:28-40}

## Notes:

### Background

**Pilate** - The historicity of Pontius Pilate is not in question as he is referenced by eight different historical authors (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Josephus, Philo, and Tacitus). Likewise, a partial inscription has been found in Ceasarea which refers to Pilate as the *praefectus Iudaeae*, which is a military title. According to Philo, Pilate received his position over Judea through his mentor Sejanus who was the commander of the Praetorian guard. According to both Philo and Josephus, he was a brutal leader who often cheated and lied to get what he wanted from both the Roman powers and the Jewish aristocracy. Upon taking his position in AD 26, he immediately provoked hatred from the Jews by erecting Roman statues throughout Jerusalem. These statues were later removed when the local population threatened to revolt. This was confrontationally offensive to the religious views of the Jewish population who saw emperor worship as blasphemous. Pilate's rule continued to be tumultuous with many local uprisings according to both Philo and Josephus. He was dismissed from power in 36 AD when he employed a detachment of soldiers to stop the route of a small Samaritan group looking for the lost tablets of Moses. This bloody interaction led to his dismissal by Vitellus, prefect of Syria. John's account of Pilate's interaction with both Jesus and the Jews seem in line with the character description provided by Josephus and Philo. Josephus balanced both the need to keep Roman justice with the need to appease the Jewish population and prevent uprising.

### For Non-Believers

The oldest manuscript fragment of the New Testament is the John Rylands Papyrus, which is a tiny piece of codex dating back to the first half of the second century. Papyrus was a common writing material made from Egyptian reeds laid crossways upon themselves. A codex is like a book rather than a scroll. On the front side of this fragment is John 18:31-33 and on the reverse side is John 18:37-38. This fragment was found in Egypt, and shows that within 25-30 years of John writing the Gospel it had traveled all the way from Asia Minor to Egypt.

## Weekly Schedule Week 43

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Read this wonderful and lengthy article on the “Social World of Bandits” during the time of Jesus for background into Barabbas.**

<http://bibleresources.americانبible.org/resource/social-world-of-bandits>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**18:28, 33** - "palace of the Roman governor" (Gk. *praitwriov*). Literally, "praetorium." See note below.

**18:33** - "Are you the King of the Jews?" Contextually, it is unclear what Pilate's tone is in this discussion. He might be genuinely curious or he might be condescending and irritated about being involved in an internal Jewish dispute.

**18:38** - "Jews" (Gk. *Iudios*). The gospel writer does not differentiate between "Jews," and "Jewish leaders" as some of the translation do. The word is the same throughout this narrative and the entire Gospel.

**18:39** - "prisoner." The word prisoner does not actually occur in the text. It is simply, "release one to you." Prisoner is implied by the context.

**18:40** - "Barabbas" (Gk. *Barabbas*). This might be a title rather than a formal name. Barabbas in Aramaic means literally son (*bar*) of the father (*abba*). See note below.

## Background

**Praetorium** - "The permanent residence of the Roman governor of Palestine was in Caesarea (Acts 23:33-35). The governor had a residence in Jerusalem which he normally occupied only during principal feasts or in times of political unrest. The location of this building in Jerusalem is uncertain, but is probably one of two locations: either (1) the fortress or tower of Antonia, on the east hill north of the temple area, which is the traditional location of the Roman praetorium since the 12th century, or (2) the palace of Herod on the west hill near the present Jaffa Gate. According to Philo (Embassy 38 [299]) Pilate had some golden shields hung there, and according to Josephus... the later Roman governor Florus stayed there." NET Bible, 18:28, 75.

**Barabbas** - It appears from the Gospel accounts that there was a Roman custom to allow one prisoner to be commuted based upon popular demand although no extra-biblical sources confirm this. In this case, the crowd calls for Barabbas who Mark and Luke refer to as one involved in a riot (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19) and Matthew calls a "well-known prisoner" (27:16). John refers to him as a "lestes." Though this word commonly refers to a robber in John (10:1, 8), the Jewish historian Josephus uses it to describe a violent revolutionary 42 times. The title may also be used by the author for literary irony as Barabbas means "son of the Father."

**Ceremonial Uncleanliness** - John notes that the Jewish leaders did not enter into Pilate's temple "to avoid ceremonial uncleanness... because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover" (John 18:28). The strict Jewish "midrash" (teaching on the law) did not allow a Jew to enter into a Gentile home without being made unclean (see also Acts 10:28). It is ironic that the Jewish leaders were so concerned about keeping the ceremonial cleanliness laws after holding an illegal trial throughout the night.

## Devotional Thoughts John 18:28-40

### King of the Jews.

"In the ancient world, people knew what kings did. Kings ruled people according to their own wishes and whims... And people know how kings became kings, too. Often the crown would pass from father to son, or to some other close male relative. But from time to time there would be a revolution. The way to the crown for anyone not in the direct family line, was through violence. This was so among the Jews as much as among the pagans. Judas Maccabeus had established his dynasty, two hundred years before Jesus met Pilate, through military revolution against the Syrians, winning for the Jews their independence, and for himself and his family a royal status. Herod the Great, thirty years before Jesus was born, had defeated the Parthians, the great empire to the east, and Rome in gratitude had allowed him to become 'King of the Jews,' though he too had not appropriate background or pedigree. So when Pilate faces Jesus, and someone hints that the reason the chief priests have handed him over is because he thinks he is a king, Pilate no doubt saw the possibility that Jesus would lead a violent revolution to free the Jews." N.T. Wright, *John*, 117-118. What does Jesus' response to Pilate's question in v. 33-36 teach us about Jesus' kingship?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 18:28-40

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 43

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### Opening Question

- I was at the baseball game in which Ken Griffey Jr. hit his 500<sup>th</sup> career homerun. Have you ever been present for any historical moments?

### In the Word: Read John 18:28-40

- How would you describe Pilate based upon this text and the notes. *We will ask this question again next week so if you don't have much that's alright.*
  - According to this scripture, what does Pilate think about Jesus?
  - What do you think Pilate means when asks "what is truth?"
- How does the way Jesus describes his kingdom contrast with the kingdom of Rome?
- Barabbas means "son of father," which appears to be a title not specifically a name. What is ironic about him being released?

### In Our Walk

- In many ways, Pilate is defined by his little lie, "truth is what I make it." What is a little lie that you tell yourself?
  - How does the big truth of the gospel of Jesus confront Pilate's little lie?
  - How does the big truth of the gospel of Jesus confront and redeem your little lie?

### Digging Deeper

- The tone or mood of this text from the perspective of Pilate is difficult to know. How does the way we understand Pilate's tone change the way we understand his questions to Jesus? If he is genuinely curious? If he is annoyed? If he is fearful? If he is ambivalent? If he is fierce and assertive?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that the big truth of Jesus will confront and redeem our little lies.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 19:1-16}

## Notes: Commentary

**The Law** - When Pilate finds no basis for a charge against Jesus, the Jewish crowd appeals to their own law by which they contend Jesus must be executed. Craig Keener does an excellent job of portraying the irony of this narrative. "The crowd (equivalent in John... to the Jerusalem elite) now explains why Jesus' execution is so urgent (19:7). Instead of regarding Jesus as no threat (19:5), the crowd responds that their law sentenced Jesus to death for making himself God's Son (19:7). The response bristles with Johannine irony: Jesus' very identification with humanity (19:5) opened him to the charge of "making himself" God's Son (10:33, 36). Further, those who cry out that the law condemns Jesus have never answered Nicodemus' objection that the law does not condemn one unless he has first been heard (7:51). Yet, the informed reader knows that the Father, rather than Jesus himself, has chosen this title for Jesus; and perhaps most dramatically of all, the law to which they appealed was the very word now enfleshed they sought to execute (1:1-18). The law required Jesus' death - but that he might save the world and, by their lifting him up, fulfill his mission as God's Son (8:28; 12:32-33)." Keener, *John*, 1124-1125.

## For Non-Believers

**Earthly Powers** - As Americans living in a prosperous and stable country we often can't imagine the temporary nature of the political powers. Yes, we might fight and argue over political values and candidates. Yes, our ruling figures may come and go. Yet, our democracy has remained amazingly stable for the last 150 years. Yet, in Jerusalem, the setting for Jesus' crucifixion, there was seemingly never political stability. Within a single lifetime it was common for a person to experience multiple political upheavals. Yet, Jesus claims to have a kingdom, a nation, beyond the scope of human authority (John 18:36; 19:11). What would it be like to have your primary allegiance in a kingdom that cannot be changed or overthrown? How would that change the way you live your day to day life within that kingdom?

## Weekly Schedule Week 44

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.  
Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Read an interesting article about the legacy of Pontius Pilate by Kevin Butcher.**

<http://www.historytoday.com/kevin-butcher/strange-afterlife-pontius-pilate>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**19:2** - "*Purple Robe.*" Purple was the traditional color of royalty.

**19:7** - "*A law, he claimed to be the son of God.*" This is not a passing reference to the Pentateuch, but a specific reference to Leviticus 24:16. The Jewish leaders accuse Jesus of blasphemy for claiming to be the son of God. The sentence for this accusation is death by stoning. Once again the Jewish leaders are portrayed as picking and choosing how they use and manipulate the law for their own purposes.

**19:9** - "*The palace*" (Gk. praetorium). Literally, "praetorium."

**19:10** - "*Power*" (Gk. Exousiav). Or, "authority." This is the same word Jesus uses to describe his ability to hand over his own life (10:18) and to describe the authority the Father gave him to execute judgment (5:27). It is a common Greek word, but John only uses it eight times in his account of the Gospel (1:12; 5:27; 10:18; 17:2; 19:10, 11).

## Background

**Flogged** - "This severe flogging was not administered by Pilate himself but his officers, who took Jesus at Pilate's order and scourged him. The author's choice of wording here may constitute an allusion to Isa 50:6, "I gave my back to those who scourge me." Three forms of corporal punishment were employed by the Romans, in increasing degree of severity: (1) fustigatio (beating), (2) flagellatio (flogging), and (3) verberatio (severe flogging, scourging). The first could be on occasion a punishment in itself, but the more severe forms were part of the capital sentence as a prelude to crucifixion. The most severe, verberatio, is what is indicated here by the Greek verb translated flogged severely (μαστιγῶω, mastigow). People died on occasion while being flogged this way; frequently it was severe enough to rip a person's body open or cut muscle and sinew to the bone. It was carried out with a whip that had fragments of bone or pieces of metal bound into the tips." *NET Bible*, 19:1, 1.

**Crown of Thorns** - The soldiers use royal symbols to mock both the claims of Jesus and the ineptness of the Jewish people under Roman rule. The crown of thorns is not meant specifically for pain. Rather, it is intended to look like the *radiant corona*, which was a form of crown intended to look like the sun with beams coming out from it. Archeologists have found many of these crowns on coinage of the time.

**The One Who Handed Me Over** - There are differing views on who this person could be. It may refer to Judas. Yet, Judas did not turn Jesus over to Pilate, but to the Jewish authorities. It might then be a reference to Caiaphas. In this way Caiaphas serves not as an individual person, but as the representative of the Jewish people. Likewise, the "one" may be simply a generic singular referring to the Jewish people. The phrase "guilty of a greater sin" is an idiom used routinely in Jewish teaching and does not release Pilate from his guilt, but points to the ones truly responsible.

## Devotional Thoughts John 19:1-16

### Motivated by Fear.

In the little we know about Pilate from the writers of the Gospels and the Jewish historians Philo and Josephus, it appears that Pilate was a man always scared of losing his grip of control. He ruled in Judea for only ten years before his position was taken away from him by his superior. Within the narrative of this week's passage, Pilate appears to be motivated by the fear of the crowds. Time and time again he tries to release Jesus, but after interacting with the Jews he grows even more afraid (19:8). Though Pilate is in no serious physical danger and he knows Jesus to be innocent, he is frightened into crucifying Jesus (John 19: 16). In contrast to Pilate, stands the silent, strength of Jesus. Though Jesus is in imminent physical danger, he shows no fear. Though his own life is at stake, he will not succumb to the voice of the crowds. Whereas for Pilate, fear is the primary motivating factor, for Jesus the primary motivating factor is to bring honor to the Father by fulfilling the work the Father sent him to do (John 17:4). What is the difference between living like Pilate and living like Jesus? How often in our lives do we allow fear to be our primary motivation?





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 19:1-16

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 44

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### Opening Question

- When is a time you did something you didn't want to because of peer pressure?

### In the Word: Read John 19:1-16

- How would you describe Pilate based upon this text and the notes?
  - What would you say motivates Pilate? How does he make his decisions?
- When you read this text what emotions does it provoke?
- There are some very specific details in this text. Which details pop out to you?
  - Why are they significant?

### In Our Walk

- Compare and contrast Jesus and Pilate from John 18:28-19:16.
  - What is the difference between what motivates them?
  - How does fear cause Pilate to do things he knows he shouldn't do?
- In your life, what motivates you?
  - What role does fear play in motivating you?
  - What would it look like in your life to be genuinely motivated by the honor of God like Jesus?

### Digging Deeper

- This is a fun study! One of my favorites in John. What are all the different ironies you can find in John 18:1-19:16?
  - How does John use these ironies to teach us something?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we will be a people motivated by the honor of God rather than fear of the crowds.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 19:17-27}

## Notes:

**The Disciple Jesus' Loved** - One of the intriguing elements of the Gospel of John is his continuing reference to a person throughout the final chapters of the Gospel referred to only as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" or "the beloved disciple" (John 13:23; 19:26; 21:7; 21:20). Who is this person? Traditionally, the belief has been that the disciple is John as the early church modern scholars believe. This is supported in three ways. First, although John is active throughout the other accounts of the Gospel, he is never mentioned in John except as a "son of Zebedee" in 21:2. Second, if the Lord's Supper Mark 14 is the same event as the Footwashing in John 13, then it was only the twelve with Jesus. Third, in John 13:23 the disciple whom Jesus loved is described as leaning next to Jesus and then "leaning back against Jesus" (13:25) a very intimate activity. In the other Gospel accounts John is described as in the inner circle and intimate with Jesus.

Yet, some scholars, including myself, argue that the beloved disciple is not John but Lazarus. This is based not only on the weakness of the John view, but on the literary evidence for Lazarus as can be seen in four ways. First, Lazarus is referred to as "the one whom Jesus loved" in John 11:3. There is not a single reference to the "disciple whom Jesus loved" before John 11:3. Second, the astute NT scholar Ben Witherington notes that there is no evidence the meal of John 13 is in Jerusalem nor is it necessarily the Passover meal. In John 12 the disciples alongside Jesus are feasting at Lazarus house. It was customary for the guest of honor to be placed just ahead of the host, and, thus, the host, Lazarus, could lean his head back on Jesus (John 13:25) if they are again at Lazarus' house. Third, John tells us that the beloved disciple took Jesus' mother into his home. Bethany was relatively close to Jerusalem and it seems a more appropriate setting for Jesus to locate Mary, rather, than the region of Galilee John was from. Finally, in John 21:22-23 Peter asks about the beloved disciple, Jesus responds, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?..." Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?" This makes perfect sense if the beloved disciple is Lazarus.

## Weekly Schedule Week 45

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

**Additional Resources:**  
**Spend some time on the well done and interesting historical examination of Jesus' crucifixion by National Geographic.**

<http://killingjesus.nationalgeographic.com/#!/prologue>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**19:17** - "Skull" (Gk. *cranium*). The Latin translation of *cranium* is *calvaria*. Hence, "calvary."

**19:19** - "A notice prepared." This was a common practice where each crucified criminal had their charges inscribed upon a sign secured to their cross. Undoubtedly, Pilate ironically wrote "king of the Jews" as a charge of blasphemy and to mock the Jewish leadership.

**19:20** - "Aramaic, Latin, and Greek" (Gk. *ebraisti, romaisi, ellevisti*). Pilate had the inscription written in all the common languages so that everyone could read what was written.

**19:25** - "his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas." It is very difficult with the ambiguity of the original language to determine if "his mother's sister" and "Mary the wife of Clopas" is two different people or one person, Mary, his mother's sister, the wife of Clopas.

## Background

**Carrying his own Cross** - John says in 19:17 that Jesus was "carrying his own cross." This was customary for Roman prisoners headed to crucifixion. Most likely, he was not carrying the entire cross but just the *patibulum*, which is the cross beam. The remainder of the cross usually remained secured in place at Golgotha. John differs in his testimony of this event from Matthew (27:32), Mark (15:21), and Luke (23:26) who all place the cross upon Simon. Most likely, after Jesus' flogging he was physically unable to carry the cross the entire way to Golgotha, and that is when Simon was forced to carry the cross behind Jesus.

**Types of Crosses** - There are four main types of Roman crosses. First, the *crux simplex* was a single vertical stake in which the criminal's arms were tied or nailed above the head. Second, the *crux commissa* looked like a T. The vertical beam did not extend beyond the cross beam, and the criminal's wrists were nailed separately extended upon the cross beam. This was the most common form of cross. Third, the *crux immissa* looked like a lower-case t, and is what is most commonly associated with the crucifixion of Jesus. The construction allowed for a permanent vertical beam in which the cross beam was locked into the vertical beam. Finally, there is the *crux decussata*, which looked like an X. Jesus was most likely hung on a *crux immissa* or *commissa*.

**Decide by a Lot** - It was common practice for a *quaternion* (commission of four soldiers) to be responsible for executing the crucifixions. It was also common practice for the soldiers to share what little possessions the criminals had. The cloak does not appear to be the purple robe that Pilate had placed upon Jesus. Instead this was a "citwn," which was a long shirt worn next to the skin somewhat like a modern undershirt but extended down to cover the entire body. By casting lots for the shirt, they unknowingly fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 22:18, which is the Psalm Jesus mutters on the cross.

## Devotional Thoughts John 19:17-27

### Stripped of his Clothes

"Jesus then is stripped of his clothes... he is naked. Here we have the answer though perhaps not in its entirety, to what Adam said. God had said to him, "Adam, where are you?" And Adam had replied, "I was frightened because I was naked, and so I hid." Jesus is naked, but in his nakedness he exposes who he is: "I AM." He is God. For us human beings, our nakedness reveals that we are not God. Our bodies are finite. We did not exist seven years ago, and we will not exist in a few years. We hide our poverty in clothing." (Jean Vanier, 113). How does the nakedness of Jesus reveal him as God?

### Stripped of his Clothes

John says that the beloved disciple took Jesus' mother, Mary, "into his home." The text literally says, "took her into his own" with home being added for clarification by the translators. Yet, this seems to downplay the significance of what is happening. Read through a few of the other passages in John that use the phrase "own:" John 1:11; 13:1; 15:19; 16:31-32. What insight do these passages give you into what the beloved disciple does for Mary? Is there more happening than just the beloved disciple providing Mary with a room? How do we minister in the same way as the beloved disciple in our life?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 19:17-27

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 45

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### Opening Question

- Besides someone in your family or your spouse, who is someone you truly love?

### In the Word: Read John 19:17-27

- What is significant about Jesus carrying his own cross?
  - Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say that Simon carried his cross. Are these inconsistent accounts? Why or why not?
- Why does Pilate write “King of the Jews” on the sign above Jesus?
- What do verses 26-27 tell us about Jesus’ relationship with both his mother and the other disciple?
- What other detail in this text sticks out to you and why?

### In Our Walk

- What would it have been like for Mary to watch her son die like this? Can you describe the emotions?
- What would it have been like for the Father to watch his son die like this?
  - Yet, it is to the glory of the Father that he must watch his own son die this way. How does Jesus’ brutal death bring honor to the Father?

### Digging Deeper

- A significant contemporary crucifixion thought has been that the Father turned away from the Son at the crucifixion. This comes from a shallow understanding of Jesus quoting Psalm 22:1 in Matthew 27:46. In John’s account of this narrative, Psalm 22 is again quoted in 19:24 and alluded to in 19:28. *Read Psalm 22.* Why is it vital to know all of Psalm 22 as the prophetic background of the crucifixion narrative?
  - Is this Psalm about God abandoning Jesus? Why or why not?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that the sacrifice of the Son will be the bedrock of our lives.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 19:28-42}

## Notes:

### Theme

**Blood and Water** - The most prevalent motif in the Gospel of John is the water motif. In his first sign at the wedding, Jesus turned the water in the ceremonial jars into wine. In the next chapter, Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be born of water and spirit. He meets the Samaritan woman at the well and offers her living water. He heals the invalid who could not make it into the water in time to be healed. During a great storm, Jesus walks across the water to his disciples in the boat. On the final day of the Festival of Tabernacles, in which the Israelites remember being saved through the waters of the Exodus, Jesus stands up and exclaims, "Whoever believes in me, rivers of living water will flow from within them." Then as Jesus shows his disciples the full extent of his love in John 13 he washes their feet from a basin of water which he had poured. Now this building water motif comes to fulfillment as the side of the crucified Jesus is pierced by the sword and blood and water come flowing forth. The blood represents his role as the Passover lamb. Yet, it is the imagery of the water, out of place in a crucifixion, that is the most powerful. In Jesus' death, the living water, the healing water, the transformed water, the new birth water, the tamed water, and the water of love are all poured out upon all who believe in him!

### For the Non-believer

Some have tried to explain the resurrection by saying that Jesus did not actually die, but just appeared to be dead. This rumor seems to have even been passed before John wrote his account of the Gospel. Yet, John goes to great length to describe the details of the crucifixion and specifically to point out that when the soldier came to break Jesus' legs, "he was already dead" (John 19:33). As if this was not enough, one of the soldiers stuck his spear into Jesus' side to make sure he was dead. John adds a unique note in the middle of this narrative. He says, "The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true" (19:35). Yet, this isn't the end goal for John. John says, "he knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe" (19:35). How does John's testimony of Jesus' death help belief?

## Weekly Schedule Week 46

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Spend some time watching three wonderful dialogues between C. Leonard Allen and Dave Clayton on Cruciformity.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUIT5bBWedU>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 19:28** - *"I am thirsty."* A reference to Psalm 22:15 or Psalm 69:21.
- 19:29** - *"wine vinegar."* (Gk. oxos). "The cheap sour wine was called in Latin posca, and referred to a cheap vinegar wine diluted heavily with water. It was the drink of slaves and soldiers, and was probably there for the soldiers who had performed the crucifixion." NET Bible, 19:29, 85
- 19:29** - *"hyssop"* (Gk. usoppos). This word can refer to any variety of plant and the specific plant is uncertain. Most likely, a reed in this text.
- 19:30** - *"It is finished"* (Gk. tetelestai). This is one word in the Greek and in the perfect tense means has been completed in the past with results continuing to the present.
- 19:36** - *"not a bone of his will be broken."* Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12. The association is with the Passover lamb.
- 19:37** - *"They will look on the one whom they have pierced."* Zechariah 12:10. Intended to be read within the entire context of Zechariah 12.
- 19:39** - *"seventy-five pounds"* (Gk. ekatros litron). Literally, "one hundred pounds." The pounds here are the Roman pound. One Roman pound is approximately twelve ounces. Thus, seventy five pounds.
- 19:40** - *"With the spices."* Since the Jews did not practice embalming the spices and oils were used to cover the stench of decay.

## Background

**Sabbath** - "The Jewish authorities, because this was the day of preparation for the Sabbath and the Passover (cf. 19:14), requested Pilate to order the legs of the three who had been crucified to be broken. This would hasten their deaths, so that the bodies could be removed before the beginning of the Sabbath at 6 p.m. This was based on the law of Deut 21:22-23 and Josh 8:29 that specified the bodies of executed criminals who had been hanged on a tree should not remain there overnight. According to Josephus this law was interpreted in the 1st century to cover the bodies of those who had been crucified (J. W. 4.5.2 [4.317]). Philo of Alexandria also mentions that on occasion, especially at festivals, the bodies were taken down and given to relatives to bury (Flaccus 10 [83]). The normal Roman practice would have been to leave the bodies on the crosses, to serve as a warning to other would-be offenders" (NET Bible, 19:31, 91).

## Motif

**Garden** - This motif will be given more attention in next week's notes, but that Jesus was laid in a garden is an intriguing note by the author and seemingly beyond the need of the text. Yet, John has been continually calling upon the language of the creation narrative in Genesis to define Jesus as the new life. For example, John 1:1 starts, "in the beginning" which echoes Genesis 1:1. Thus, the garden imagery should invoke the creation narrative.

## Devotional Thoughts John 19:28-42

### Nicodemus

"We left Nicodemus in John 3 in the twilight, between darkness and light. Jesus's words to him at night had left him scratching his head, but he doesn't walk away and reject Jesus. He's muttering, 'how can this be?' I need to meet Nicodemus again. He's so perplexed. I want to know how he works this out. Thankfully, John gives us two more views of Nicodemus... The next time we find Nicodemus (7:45-52) he is with his fellow-Pharisees and the chief priests. The lynch mob gunning for Jesus is stirring against the growing wave of support for the prophet from Nazareth. The Jews want their guards to seize Jesus, but they are awestruck and tell the religious leaders, "We've never heard a man talk this way. This is where Nicodemus comes back into John's story a second time. To his fellow-Jewish religious leaders, he promotes a common sense notion of justice: a person is innocent until proven guilty... So Nicodemus stands for justice, though he stops short of claiming Jesus is the Messiah... Now in John 19, Jesus has been crucified... Joseph comes to take Jesus's body down from the cross, and his friend, Nicodemus tags along to help... Nicodemus took a step out of the darkness, into twilight, now into the light. He moves out from undercover Christ-follower and takes a step into the light." (Harris, 169-171).





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 19:28-42

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 46

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### Opening Question

- When is a time in your life that you have finished a big project? What was that like?

### In the Word: Read John 19:28-42

- What do you think Jesus means when he says, “it is finished?”
- What is the significance of the blood and water flowing from Jesus’ side?
  - Where else in the Gospel of John have you seen the motif of water?
  - How does the water from Jesus’ side in the crucifixion relate to this?
- Why do you think in the middle of the burial narrative John includes verse 35?
- What is the purpose of the spices, oils, and linens in the burial? Why does John include these details?

### In Our Walk

- Nicodemus is only mentioned in the Gospel of John. Trace Nicodemus in the Gospel of John by reading John 3:1-14, followed by 7:45-52, and finally, 19:38-40. How does Nicodemus develop as a person throughout the Gospel of John?
- Do you think he is a believer in Jesus?
- How does Nicodemus relate to your faith journey or the faith journey of someone you know?

### Digging Deeper

- John routinely says, “These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled.” In this case, he points to Exodus 12:46 and Zechariah 12:10. How do these passages provide background to Jesus’ crucifixion and burial?
  - Why is it so important to John that scripture be fulfilled?
  - How does the fulfillment of scripture help you believe?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we will have a faith that moves all the way to true belief!
- Pray for the Nicodemuses in our midst.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 20:1-9}

## Notes:

**Creation imagery in the Death, Burial, and Resurrection** - When reading the opening verses of John (1:1-18) it is obvious that John is telling the story of Jesus through the imagery of Genesis 1-3, the story of creation. What is less obvious, but as centrally important in the Gospel, is how John uses the same imagery of Genesis 1-3 in the passion and resurrection of Jesus. The following chart shows the linguistic linkage between Gen. 3 and John 18-21.

Motif	Genesis 1-3	John 18-21
Garden	2:8-10, 15-16; 3:8-10, 23	18:1, 3; 19:41;
1 <sup>st</sup> day	1:5	20:1
Morning	1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31	20:1, 21:4
Water	1:2, 6-10, 20-21; 2:6-10	19:34; 21:7
Nudity/Clothing	2:25; 3:7-11	19:23-24; 20:5-8
God/Man "Saw"	1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 3:6;	19:26, 35, 20:1, 6, 8, 12, 14, 20
"Finished"	2:2	19:28-31
Sabbath	2:2-3	19:31, 20:1 (Sab. in Gk.)
Breath/Spirit	2:7	20:22-23
Commission	1:28	20:21
Role of Women	2:21-24; 3:1-6	20:1-2, 11-18
Gardener	2:15	20:15

I suggest moving slowly through each of these passages and their correlating passages. Then, read Genesis 1-3 immediately followed by John 18-21 and you will notice even more underlying motif. Jeanine Brown in her wonderful article on this subject writes, "the theme of creation's renewal is disclosed most clearly through a narrative reading of John. Woven into the fabric of the story of the Fourth Gospel, the theme of creation and its renewal emerges through suggestion and allusion rather than through explicit statements. Yet this is exactly what we ought to expect from narrative texts such as John's Gospel" (*Creation Renewal*, 290). In the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, God is recreating the world and humanity in the way he originally intended in the initial creation.

## Weekly Schedule Week 47

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text. Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to the wonderful sermon by my friend Jonathan Storment entitled "The World Born Again."**

<http://www.highlandchurch.org/jonathan-storment/world-born-jonathan-storment-october-23-2016>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**20:1** - *"First day of the week."* This is a reference to early Sunday morning as the Passover ran from Friday night through Saturday night.

**20:2** - *"the one whom Jesus loved."* Though most scholars believe this to be John, others argue convincingly for Lazarus. See notes from John 19:17-27.

**20:5** - *"He bent over."* (Gk. *parakuptw*). Jewish tombs were low to the ground and often set down into the ground. Thus, the disciple had to bend over and look down into the tomb.

**20:6** - *"Strips of linen lying there."* The text does not give precise detail as to where the strips of linen were lying. Some argue they were simply lying on the ground while others say they were lying in the place where Jesus would have been laid.

## Background

**Mary Magdalene** - Although Matthew (28:1), Mark (16:1) and Luke (24:10) all include and list first Mary Magdalene as one of a few women at the empty tomb, John mentions only Mary in his account (John 20:1). Though at first this seems a discrepancy, John appears to simply be accentuating Mary Magdalene (20:2). This can be confirmed grammatically from John as Mary says specifically *"we don't know"* (20:2). Although Mary is mentioned by name in the Gospels more than most of the apostles, we know little about her. Luke tells us that seven demons were cast out of her (Luke 8:2). Yet, John links Mary of Magdalene as the pronouncer of Good News with Mariam, Moses sister who also bring good news (Exodus 15). In John 20:16, Jesus specifically calls Mary, *"Mariam"* undoubtedly utilizing the Exodus imagery.

**Tomb Stones** - Jewish tomb stones were approximately 4'-6' in diameter and 1' thick. They weighed anywhere between 2000-4000 lbs. Most often at the tomb of a wealthy man (Matt. 27:57-61) the stone was placed in a groove between the tomb and the outer wall which held the stone in place. Though two men could roll the tomb into place (Matt. 27:60; John 19:38-42) using the grooved track, it would be nearly impossible for a single person to move the stone back from in front of the tomb.

## Theme

**Believe** - John makes it clear that his purpose in writing the gospel was so that people may believe (John 20:31). This is a motif that John establishes in the prologue to the Gospel (1:7, 12), introduces through the calling of the first disciples (1:50), affirms as the purpose of the signs (2:11, 22), and runs through nearly every chapter of the Gospel. Though Matthew, Mark and Luke all use the noun *"faith"* routinely in their accounts of the Gospel, John uses the verbal form of the same word, which we translate *"believe."* For John, faith is active and dynamic. It is a verb not a noun. This motif continues to build in John 20:8 as the disciple whom Jesus loved goes into the empty tomb. *"He saw and believed."*

## Devotional Thoughts John 20:1-9

### Running to the Tomb

Peter needs a restart like nobody's business. This boisterous and exuberant disciple of Jesus had his entire world fall down around him in the final scenes before the crucifixion of Jesus. First, he attempted to defend Jesus through the sword and was reprimanded when he cut off the ear of high priest's servant. (18:10). To make matters worse he denied Jesus three different times over the course of one night (18:15-27). When he thought it could get no worse, he watched his teacher, messiah, and friend be brutally flogged, humiliated, and crucified to the applause of the Jewish crowds. Not only had Peter chosen wrong, but he had chosen *very* wrong. It is hard to imagine Peter's state of mind early on the first day of the week after all this has gone down. Did he sleep at all? Is he burned out? Exhausted? Confused? Peter needs a restart. One's coming, but he doesn't know that yet. So when his friend Mary, the one from Magdala, shows up early that morning, he can't believe what she says, *"the tomb's empty... like, empty."* A flicker of hope, a flash of confusion, and a sprint to the tomb because Peter needs a restart. Do you need a restart in your life? Maybe it's time to get up and sprint to the tomb!



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 20:1-9

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 47

### Opening Question

- What is a motif or theme of your life?

### Exercise in the Word: Read John 20:1-9

- One of the most significant motifs in the Gospel of John is creation. Though this is obvious in the opening verses of John (1:1-18) i.e. “in the beginning” it is also a prevalent theme in the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Instead of discussion questions, this guide will compare motifs in Genesis 1-3 with the correlating motif in John 18-21.
- With each motif ask the following question: What is this correlation trying to teach us?

### Motif in Genesis 1-3 and John 18-21

Motif	Genesis 1-3	John 18-21
Garden	2:8-10, 15-16; 3:8-10, 23	18:1, 3; 19:41;
1 <sup>st</sup> day	1:5	20:1
Morning	1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31	20:1, 21:4
Water	1:2, 6-10, 20-21; 2:6-10	19:34; 21:7
Nudity/Clothing	2:25; 3:7-11	19:23-24; 20:5-8
God/Man “Saw”	1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 24, 31; 3:6;	19:26, 35, 20:1, 6, 8, 12, 14, 20
“Finished”	2:2	19:28-31
Sabbath	2:2-3	19:31, 20:1 (Sab. in Gk.)
Breath/Spirit	2:7	20:22-23
Commission	1:28	20:21
Role of Women	2:21-24; 3:1-6	20:1-2, 11-18
Gardener	2:15	20:15

### In Our Walk

- How does this lesson change our understanding of what God is doing in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus?

### Closing Prayer

- Praise God for his new creation!



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 20:10-18}

## Notes:

**Recognizing Jesus** - In John 20:14, Mary turns around and sees Jesus. Yet, she does not recognize him. In ancient literature, this is a classic recognition type-scene in which a character turns around to behold a person whom the audience knows as the hero but the character does not initially recognize. The author intends to make some underlying points often using irony within the content of the ensuing dialogue before the reveal. In this text, the irony is prevalent as Jesus asks Mary why she is crying and who she is looking for? Obviously, she is crying because Jesus is dead although he's standing there alive and she is looking for Jesus though he is the one who is talking to her. Again, she thinks he is the lowly gardener though he is in fact Lord of all things. Finally, she asks where he has carried Jesus so she can go get him. Of course, the audience knows the Father has already gotten the Son from where he has been. Yet, most significant in this form of literature is how the character finally comes to recognize Jesus. In Luke 24:16-31 the disciples on their way to Emmaus finally recognize Jesus as he breaks bread with them (see also John 21:4-7). Yet, in this text Mary recognizes Jesus when he calls her by name for the good shepherd calls his sheep by name (John 10:3-5).

## For the Non-Believer

Jesus claims some radical things during his ministry. He claims to be "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). He says he is the "bread of life" and "the light of the world" (John 6:35; 8:12). He even goes so far as to say that not a single person can come to God, the Father, unless they come through him. This is audacious, exclusive language that many today would call narrow-minded. Yet, the question is not whether Jesus is being audacious or narrow-minded. The real question is whether he is right. How could such claims be validated? That must be a question that is constantly in the mind of his disciples. "How do we know this guy is for real?" For Mary of Magdala, one of Jesus' closest followers, the answer comes not in his healing her or watching him die on the cross. Rather, it comes when she interacts with a living man who she watched die and be buried. Mary's claim in many ways is just as audacious when she says "I have seen the Lord!" (John 20:18). How does the resurrection of Jesus validate his claims in Mary's mind?

## Weekly Schedule Week 48

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

**Additional Resources:**  
**Watch this brief but intriguing video on the background and historical development of Mary Magdalene.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-jx8I49D3k>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**20:11** - *"Mary stood outside the tomb..."* Though the text does not specifically say, it appears that Mary returned to the tomb behind Peter and the beloved disciple. When they return to the place they are staying she remains at the tomb to mourn.

**20:12** - *"one at the head and one at the feet."* The angels at the head and feet of the site customarily demonstrated holiness. See note below.

**20:13, 15** - *"Woman."* (Gk. *gune*). This is the same title Jesus addresses his mother with. It is easy to over analyze this title here, but it seems to be a way that the angels and Jesus can get Mary's attention without using her name which is significant for his reveal in 20:16.

**20:15** - *"gardener"* (Gk. *kepuros*). Scholars are divided on the purpose of Mary's confusion over who Jesus is. Some argue the title gardener points back towards the true vine teaching in John 15:1-8. Yet, there is no pruning of Mary in this text and the words for gardener in John 15:1, *"gewrgos"* is different than the word used in this text. Other scholars see it as simply a note of humor that Mary would think the Lord of all the earth is a gardener. Yet, most scholars see an allusion to creation motifs in this text.

## Background

**Do Not Hold on To Me** - Much has been written and overwritten concerning why Jesus tells Mary to let go of him. It is best to not overanalyze this text. The NIV does a nice job of translating the phrase "do not hold on to me." Craig Keener describes the emotion of this scene, "Such a moment of revelation would evoke intense emotion in an ancient setting, as it would be today. That she would embrace Jesus (implied in 20:17) would not be surprising... a woman might be expected to embrace a loved one she had wrongly assumed dead. In this context, 'touch' probably refers to 'embrace' (Keener, 1192-3). Mary is clinging to Jesus but he makes it clear to her that they both still have work to do. He must ascend to the father and she must tell the other disciples (20:17). Thus, she must let go of him!

**Angels at the Head and Feet** - John notes specifically that the angels were sitting at the head and feet at the place where Jesus' body had been laid. Throughout the Gospel, John has been establishing Jesus as the new tabernacle or dwelling place of the divine. The astute reader recognizes the symbolism of these two angels alongside the two cherubim placed on either side of the mercy seat, which served as a cover for the ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:18-21). On the day of atonement, the high priest would enter the holy of holies and sprinkled the sacrificed blood that represented the sins of the people upon the mercy seat between the cherubim. In the Exodus narrative God says to his people that it is from this location that he will "meet with you and give you all my commands" (Exodus 25:22). In the resurrection of Jesus God once again redeems the sin of humanity and meets with his people offering a new command.

## Devotional Thoughts John 20:10-18

### Thankfulness

On the fourth Thursday in the month of November, Americans celebrate a day of Thanksgiving. This tradition is traced to the early colonial settlers who shared a meal of thanks for a bountiful harvest and landing safely in their new country. It is not hard to imagine that in a new country where life was constantly in the balance there was much reason to be thankful. Often in our present culture thanksgiving has become more like an opening act for the great shopping season of Christmas. Ironically, in the most prosperous and safe country the world has ever known, we spend less and less time being thankful. We can barely make it through a day of thanksgiving without buying something else that we should be but often aren't thankful for. Too often Americans are not thankful for this very reason: we place the source of thankfulness in the wrong place. We might look toward Mary of Magdala as example of thankfulness for our lives. Per Luke 8:2 Mary had been cleansed from seven demons and in the passage for this week she is the first person to encounter the resurrected Jesus. Though Mary has endured many trials in her life, her thankfulness is based in what God has done in Jesus, and, in turn, what God has done for Jesus.





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 20:10-18

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 48

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### Opening Question

- What is the most thankful you have ever been?

### In the Word: Read John 20:10-18

- How would you describe Mary Magdalene's relationship with Jesus? *Luke 8:2, if needed.*
  - What is the significance of Mary being the first to meet the resurrected Jesus?
- Do you think John intends for this passage to be humorous? Why or why not?
- Why does Jesus tell Mary, "Do not hold on to me?"
- What is the work of both Mary and Jesus in this passage?
  - How does Mary's work derive from the work of Jesus?

### In Our Walk

- Jesus calls Mary by name. What does it mean to you that Jesus knows your name?
  - How does the resurrection of Jesus give us new identity?
- Compare and contrast the work of Mary with our work as Christians.
- Why should we be eternally grateful for the resurrection of Jesus?

### Sharing our Faith

- For the early church, the resurrection of Jesus was the foundational event for sharing their belief in Jesus. How is this different than how we often share our faith today?
  - Do you think we should return to centering our evangelism around the resurrection? Why or why not?
  - In our everyday life, how do we share with people about the resurrection of Jesus?

### Closing Prayer

- Pray that we can be like Mary Magdalene in finding our identity and work in Jesus.
- Pray that we people of thankfulness all the time.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 20:19-23}

## Notes:

### Background

**Breathed/Holy Spirit** - The initial life of man is given by God as described in Genesis 2:7, "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." In this intimate portrayal, God breathes life into the nostrils of man. This imagery returns in Ezekiel 37:1-14. Ezekiel looks into the valley of dry bones representing the dead, scattered people of Israel. God calls on him to prophesy to the bones, which begin to cling together in bone and sinew. Then Ezekiel prophesies to the breath/spirit to come and breathe life into the corpses. God promises to Israel that he will reach into their graves and pull them out alive. The section ends when the Lord says, "I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord." This imagery is the prophetic background of John 20:22, "with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" This is now the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus. The reclaimed and re-created humanity of Jesus born by the Spirit is thus poured into the disciples.

### Theme

**Holy Spirit** - In the background notes above, we tracked the Holy Spirit through the story of Israel. It is also important for understanding John 20:22 to track the motif of the Spirit in the rest of the Gospel of John. In John 1, John the Baptist testifies that he has seen the Spirit descend upon Jesus. Thus, Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit. In chapter 3, Jesus is talking with Nicodemus. He tells him he must be born again of water and the Spirit for "flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit give birth to the spirit" (3:6). This outpouring of the Spirit could not be received until after Jesus had been glorified (John 7:39). In his final discourse with his disciples, Jesus lays out an extensive portrayal of the Holy Spirit as the Advocate who will testify about Jesus, lead the disciples into truth, and convict the world of sin. Thus, as Jesus sends out the disciples, he breathes on them the Holy Spirit who will provide them with all the help they need to accomplish their mission.

## Weekly Schedule Week 49

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**

**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to and sing "Holy Spirit, Breath on Me" by Praise and Harmony.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHH5MurHLUk>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

- 20:19** - “*were together.*” This phrase is absent in many of the earliest and most reliable sources. Yet, it seems implied from the text regardless.
- 20:19** - “*doors locked*” (Gk. Kleiw). Literally, “shut.” As many ancient doors were seldom shut or even able to be shut, the idea for the modern reader is that the doors were locked.
- 20:19** - “*Jewish leaders*” (Gk. loudiaoi). Literally, “jews.” This phrase is used in reference to the Jewish people, residents of Jerusalem, or Jewish leaders. The context implies Jewish leaders in this case.
- 20:20** - “*saw the Lord.*” This phrase ties together the encounter of Mary Magdalene with the risen Lord with the rest of the disciples. Mary says to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and now they see him for themselves.
- 20:22** - “*Breathed/Holy Spirit*” (Gk. emphusaw/Pneumatos). There is a play on words here. The noun for the breath is pneumatos, but the verb is emphusaw. John describes Jesus action as breathing out the breath (or Holy Spirit). See notes above.

## Commentary

**Locked Doors** - “The fact that the disciples locked the doors is a perfectly understandable reaction to the events of the past few days. But what is the significance of the inclusion of this statement by the author? It is often taken to mean that Jesus, when he entered the room, passed through the closed doors. This may well be the case, but it may be assuming too much about our knowledge of the mode in which the resurrected body of Jesus exists. The text does not explicitly state how Jesus got through the closed doors. It is possible to assume that the doors opened of their own accord before him, or that he simply appeared in the middle of the room without passing through the doors at all. The point the author makes here is simply that the closed doors were no obstacle at all to the resurrected Jesus.” *NET Bible, 20:19, 32.*

**Authority, Sin, and Mission** - This passage is not simply a blanket statement about the Apostles authority to offer forgiveness of sin as is often understood. A quick study through the way the phrase “sin” is defined in the Gospel of John gives clarity to what Jesus is really telling his disciples. The Gospel makes it clear in the opening chapter that it is Jesus alone who takes away sin as John the Baptist proclaims upon seeing Jesus, “look, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). Likewise, there is a linkage between the work of Jesus and the sinfulness of humanity throughout the Gospel. For example, when Jesus heals the lame man, Jesus says to him, “stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” (5:14). Yet, it is the dialogue in John 8 and the ensuing narrative of John 9 where John really provides a coherent theology of sin. He teaches that *all* men are slaves to sin and only through belief in him can they be released. He then demonstrates this teaching missionally through healing the man born blind, whom the religious elite considered sinful. This mission then is passed to his disciples.

## Devotional Thoughts John 20:19-23

### Peace Be With You

Life seems to be very busy... too busy most of the time. From the hustle and bustle of everyday life to the quickened pace of holidays and emergency, it seems like we live in a pace that is unsustainable in many ways. I often wonder what the pace of the early disciples was like. The book of Acts says “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah” (5:42). Likewise, they were so busy in Acts 6 that the Greek widows were being neglected in the sharing of food. They were imprisoned, sent to different towns, and all while preaching the good news everyday. That’s a busy lifestyle. It’s interesting because in the Gospel of John there is no reference to peace until Jesus is alone with his disciples in the farewell discourse where he says, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you” (John 14:27). Again, at the end of the same discourse he says, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace” (16:33). When Jesus first appears to his disciples following the resurrection, he says three times, “Peace be with you!” (John 20:19, 21, 26). Though Jesus knows how busy their lives are about to become, he leaves peace with them.” I think too often we think peace is about not being busy all the time. Yet, Jesus says to his very busy disciples that peace is not the absence of busyness, but is about life in Jesus. Despite our busyness, disciples of Jesus can find peace because Jesus has overcome the world through the resurrection.



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 20:19-23

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 49

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### Opening Question

- Have you ever been a part of a birth? Be it a baby, animal, etc.? What was it like to experience the first breath?

### In the Word: Read John 20:19-23

- What do you think is the significance of Jesus' first words to his disciples, "Peace be with you?"
- Why does Jesus "breathe" on his disciples as he gives the Holy Spirit?
  - How does this passage relate to Genesis 2:4-7?
  - How does this passage relate to Ezekiel 37:4-6 (*or through 14 if you have time*)?
- In verse 23, Jesus gives the disciples authority to forgive sins. What does this mean?
  - Why is it important?

### In Our Walk

- Often, we talk about finding peace this time of year by being involved in less, taking more time for me, or finding safe spaces. Yet, when Jesus comes to the disciples he offers them peace though they are about to become more involved, having less time for themselves, and face persecution. How does the resurrected Jesus offer us real peace that is different than this world?
- Do you think that the commission Jesus gives his disciples in 20:21 applies to us still today?
  - What is this commission then according to the Gospel of John?
- What does it mean that Jesus has breathed the Holy Spirit upon each of us?

### Closing Prayer

- Thank the Lord for the gift of his Holy Spirit.
- Pray that we can grow in the peace of the resurrection.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 20:24-29}

## Notes:

### Theme

**Believe** - In the Gospel of John, belief is not only a premier theme, it is an active theme. The author never uses the noun *pistis* (faith), but uses the verb *pisteuo* (believe) 98 times in the Gospel. In John's Gospel, the primary purpose or mission of Jesus' disciples is to believe in Jesus. He says in 6:29, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." Even eternal life for a disciple stems in belief, "the one who believe has eternal life" (John 6:47). There is a dynamic tension throughout the Gospel between Jesus revealing his glory (through the signs or teaching) causing people to believe in him and belief in him leading to beholding his glory. This theme has been building towards the Thomas narrative. The greatest way in which Jesus reveals the Father's glory is through his death, burial, and resurrection (John 12:28). Thomas declares that he will not believe unless he sees. Because the glory of God has been revealed in the death, burial, and resurrection, Thomas indeed has something to see. Seeing provokes believing, and yet, there is a great belief that will be talked about next week.

### For the Non-Believer

**Doubt Your Doubts** - I was at a Christian event one time where a middle-aged man named Chris shared his story of coming to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. He was an engineer with multiple advanced degrees. It only took a moment to realize he was a highly rational, cognitive form of person. Whereas many stories of coming to faith in Jesus are very emotional, his was almost exclusively thoughtful. He said that he was moving to believe in Jesus while studying the Bible with a friend of his, but he had so many doubts: he doubted that Jesus rose from the dead, doubted that he could heal people, doubted that the Bible was real, and doubted there was a God at all. One day as he was hashing through all of this in his mind, he decided there was only one thing he hadn't doubted. His own doubts. He said for the first time he had to truly wrestle with where his doubts came from and if they were doubts or just fear. Have you doubted your doubts?

## Weekly Schedule Week 50

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**

**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Listen to the sermon and read the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Listen to Tim Keller's wonderful sermon on doubt entitled "Facing Doubt"**

[http://www.redeemer.com/learn/resources\\_by\\_topic/public\\_faith/public\\_faith\\_sermon\\_series/](http://www.redeemer.com/learn/resources_by_topic/public_faith/public_faith_sermon_series/)

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**20:24** - "*Didymus*" (Gk. Didymus). Didymus means "the twin" in Greek, which is also what "Thomas" means in Aramiac. It is unknown if there is any significance to this name.

**20:26** - "*A week later*" (Gk. hemeras oxtos). Literally, "eight days." Eight days would have brought the next scene to the following first day of the week. So "a week later." See note below.

**20:26** - "*in the house*" (Gk. ). Literally, "inside." Back in the house is implied.

**20:26** - "*doors locked*" (Gk. Kleiw). Literally, "shut." As many ancient doors were seldom shut or even able to be shut, the idea for the modern reader is that the doors were locked.

**20:27** - "*see*" (Gk. ide). Though this is literally translated "see," the word is the Greek has more of a connotation of examining.

## Commentary

**See and Touch** - The resurrected Jesus is not a ghost or ethereal entity floating arbitrarily from place to place. John makes this point very clear. He calls upon Thomas to "put your finger here" (you can imagine Jesus pointing to his wrists), examine my hands (he rolls them back and forth), put your hand in my side (he reaches for Thomas' hand as he says this), "stop doubting and believe" (he says with a smile). For the disciples, the resurrected Jesus was an empirical experience that became the foundation for believing. Thus, John writes in 1 John 1:1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life."

**Eight Days** - The NIV begins v. 26 with the phrase "a week later." Yet, the passage literally says "after eight days." The distinction might be significant for two reasons without attempting to read too much into the passage. First, both the NIV and most other translations especially point out that a week has passed. This can either be a historical note intended to show a passing of time and the continued gathering of the disciples, or it can be a literary note intended to demonstrate the beginning of a new week in which Thomas now comes to believe. Second, if the eight days has a more literary significance, then the biblical background to eight days is important. Genesis 17 commands that each Israelite male was to be circumcised on the eighth day as a sign of the covenant. This physical sign was to affirm an everlasting covenant. This is similar to the Thomas account where the physical "seeing" and "touching" of Jesus affirms belief in an everlasting covenant. Similarly, most Jewish festivals lasted eight days with the first days being a time of celebration, which built to the culmination of the final day. This might be a similar theme in the resurrection account (Lev. 23:36). Finally, in Leviticus 8-9 Moses is called to ordain and commission the Levites as Priests over Israel. The final sacrifices for their consecration takes place on the eighth day. Jesus appears to be consecrating his new priests into service.

## Devotional Thoughts John 20:24-29

### Room for Doubt

I believe that John intentionally does not use the noun "faith" in the Gospel of John. A noun is an object, a person, place, or thing. Because Faith is obviously not a person or place, it must be a thing. If faith is a noun than it can be possessed or not possessed. It can be absolute or abstract. Too often we think of faith as a noun. We either have faith or we don't. Our faith is absolute or it is abstract. The first has value, the second has none. For John, faith is a verb. We translate it as believe. In Greek, it is the same word as the word faith, just in a verbal form. A verb describes an action, state, or occurrence. Faith has action. Not just in what I do, but in my process of belief. Thomas is the perfect example of active believing. Thomas has spent the last three years with the other disciples. He knows them and trusts them. He knows their love for Jesus and their love for him. Yet, when they tell him that Jesus is alive, he doesn't believe... fully. Notice, an entire week later and he is still with the disciples in the room. He is still waiting, still wondering, still doubting. This is Thomas' verbal believing. If faith is a noun he doesn't have it. Yet, if it's a verb then it is something he doing. He is believing. Within the believing of Thomas, there is room for his doubt. It is not as if, when he finally sees Jesus hands and feet, he suddenly moves from no faith to full faith. Instead, he is actively believing by seeing and by seeing he moves to believing. Don't make faith into a noun in your life. Let it be active, dynamic, and, like Thomas, honest.





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 20:24-29

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 50

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### Opening Question

- Have you ever missed something important?

### In the Word: Read John 20:24-29

- This is simply speculation, but where do you think Thomas is when Jesus appeared to the other disciples?
- Why do you think Jesus waits eight days before he appears to Thomas?
  - What is Thomas doing during this week?

***Do not have people this week give answer to their doubt. It is good to spend this one week in doubt like Thomas did.***

### In Our Walk

- *Try to have every person answer the following question:* In your life, either in the past or present, when have you struggled with doubt about Jesus or God?
  - Who did you share this doubt with?
  - What did you do (or are currently doing) during your time of doubt?
- Why do you think we are often uncomfortable sharing our doubts about Jesus?
- In what ways does doubt actually help strengthen our belief?

### Closing Prayer

- Thank the Lord that he allows us room to doubt.
- Pray that we can be open with our doubt in order that we might come to real belief.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 20:30-31}

## Notes:

### Theme

**Believe** - In the Gospel of John, belief is not only a premier theme, it is an active theme. The author never uses the noun *pistis* (faith), but uses the verb *pisteuo* (believe) 98 times in the Gospel. In John's Gospel, the primary purpose or mission of Jesus' disciples is to believe in Jesus as is affirmed in the purpose statement of the Gospel, John 20:31, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John has already made it clear that eternal life for a disciple stems in belief, "the one who believe has eternal life" (John 6:47). There is a dynamic tension throughout the Gospel between Jesus revealing his glory (through the signs or teaching) causing people to believe in him and belief in him leading to beholding his glory. This theme has been building towards the Thomas narrative. The greatest way in which Jesus reveals the Father's glory is through his death, burial, and resurrection (John 12:28). Thomas declares that he will not believe unless he sees. Because the glory of God has been revealed in the death, burial, and resurrection, Thomas indeed has something to see. Seeing provokes believing, and yet, there is a belief that is more blessed than Thomas'. Instead, Jesus says, "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." This is the state of present day disciples. We have not witnessed the resurrected Jesus in the way that the disciples have. Yet, we believe.

### For the Non-Believer

**Seeing is Believing** - There is a common myth in our contemporary world that "seeing is believing." This is shorthand for the idea that we can only believe in what we can examine empirically. Thus, many people contend that they cannot believe in a God, nevertheless Jesus, because they cannot see him. Yet, every person who has ever walked the face of this planet has believed in things that they cannot see. No one has ever seen gravity, only the effects of gravity. Yet, we believe in it. None of us can empirically prove any historical event. Still, we believe in history. Jesus wants his disciples to believe though they do not see, is that really too farfetched?

## Weekly Schedule Week 51

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.  
Follow the Lectio Divina, if  
needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided  
notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers,  
thoughts, or even your own  
commentary on the text. Work  
through the devotional thoughts  
on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in  
group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Read Kelli S. O'Brien's lengthy  
article, "Written That You May  
Believe: John 20 and Narrative  
Rhetoric."**

Available as a PDF online.  
Search Kelli S. O'Brien, John  
20.

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**20:28** - *"My Lord and my God"* (Gk. *Mou kurios kai mou theos*). This exact confessional statement and title only exists together in this occurrence in scripture. See notes below.

**20:29** - *"Blessed"* (Gk. *makarois*). Or, "happy." This word is the same word used routinely in the beatitudes (Matthew 5). See notes below.

**20:31** - *"Messiah"* (Gk. *Christos*). Literally, "Christ." This word is rooted in the Hebrew word for "the anointed one." Titles are important, and this is the formal title of Jesus, "the Messiah, Son of God."

## Commentary

**My Lord and My God** - Though this passage is technically in our reading from last week, Thomas' confession, "my Lord and my God," is so innately tied to this week's text that examination of this statement is useful here. What exactly does Thomas mean by this statement? Often scholars point this verse as a clear statement that Jesus is God. John seems to have been building the discussion to this point. The opening verses of John state that Jesus "was God." Most significantly, this is not Thomas' first discussion with Jesus. His previous interaction as recorded in the Gospel is useful. In John 14, Thomas tells Jesus that he doesn't know where Jesus is going. Jesus' response is one of the more well-known passages in John, yet the context is often overlooked. He answers, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." As Thomas looks at the resurrected Jesus, he finally realizes that he truly is seeing the Father, not only that, but he has known the father as well.

**Blessed** - Jesus says in 20:29, "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." If this sentence formation sounds familiar, it is because it is nearly identical to the beatitudes of Matthew 5. In this famous sermon, the introduction to the sermon on the mount, Jesus restructures the blessed and destitute by reversing their place. Now it is the poor, those who mourn, etc. who are blessed. There are some elements that while important in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, John excludes from his account of the Gospel such as the Lord's Supper, great commission, and the sermon on the mount. Still, the great Jewish theme of those who are blessed that opens in the Psalter (Psalm 1:1) is not absent from John's account of the Gospel. It is only nuanced. John first introduces this theme in the only other account of the word "blessed" in the Gospel in 13:17. Having washed his disciples feet and shown them the fullness of his love, he teaches the disciples to do the same to one another, and concludes, "you will be blessed if you do them." For John, the blessed person has two dimensions: loving like Jesus loved and believing in Jesus without seeing Jesus.

## Devotional Thoughts John 20:30-31

### That You May Believe

Notice the exact phrasing of John's purpose statement in 20:31, "these are written that you may believe..." John's intention is not to write a biography or tell an interesting story. Rather, it is to provoke belief in us. How does he do that? In 2005, the biblical scholar, Kelli S. O'Brien, wrote an influential article on John 20 called, "Written That You May Believe: John 20 and Narrative Rhetoric." In this article, he argues that "the narrative strategies of the Gospel show, rather than merely tell, the reader what believing is, creating an experience for the reader that is certainly not the same as being there but can be significant nonetheless" (285). Simply stated, John writes for us to experience the process of believing through the stories of multiple people in the Gospel such as Nicodemus, the woman at the well, Mary Magdalene, Peter, and Thomas. Having spent the year dwelling slowly through the Gospel of John, I think O'Brien's assessment is right on. Think back on the last year in John. In what ways have you experienced the stories of Jesus more than just reading about them? What details do you remember from the Gospel? Which person in the Gospel do you most relate to?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 20:30-31

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 51

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### Opening Question

- What is your earliest memory?

### In the Word: Read John 20:30-31

- What is a “sign” in the Gospel of John?
- Why did John record these signs?
  - What is the ultimate sign that leads to believing?
- John 20:30-31 is the purpose statement of the Gospel according to John. What is the entire purpose of the Gospel according to John?

### In Our Walk

- *Last week we started a conversation about doubt and we will finish it this week.* Does God want us to continually remain in a place of doubt? Why or why not?
- What finally provoked Thomas to stop doubting and believe?
  - For Thomas seeing the resurrected Jesus was an historical marker that he never forgot and probably always went back to in his times of doubt. A study through the New Testament reveals that the resurrection of Jesus was always the foundational historical marker for the early church. Why do you think this is?
  - Should the resurrection be the foundational historical marker in our belief?
- *Have everyone answer this question:* What other historical markers have you had in your life that you can point back to and say, “I have seen the Lord?”

### Closing Prayer

- Thank the Lord for the resurrection of the son.
- Pray that we can recognize the places in which the Lord has been at work.



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 21:1-14}

## Notes:

### Theme

**Recognizing Jesus** - In the notes from John 20:10-18, we explored Mary turning to recognize Jesus. In ancient literature, this is a classic recognition type-scene in which a character turns around to behold a person whom the audience knows as the hero but the character does not initially recognize. The author intends to make some underlying points often using irony within the content of the ensuing dialogue before the reveal. This week's passage is also a recognition scene. At the calling of Peter, the disciples are back to work as fisherman. They are unsuccessful, with no harvest, no bounty. Though they fished all night, "they caught nothing" (21:3). Unrecognized, Jesus stands on the shore and shouts to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" This is amusing for two points. First, Jesus, who knows all, knows they haven't caught any fish. You can almost see him shaking his head and laughing as he asks this. Second, Jesus calls them friends though they don't recognize the significance. In John 15:15, Jesus tells his disciples, "I no longer call you servants... now you are my friends." This is not a casual greeting, it is a divine acknowledgment that the disciples miss. Finally, in all recognition type-scenes there is significance in when and how the characters recognize the hero. In this case, it occurs when they obey the strangers advice and receive the abundant harvest. In the abundance, they recognize the Lord. It is then *Jesus* who calls them, not back to work but to breakfast!"

### For the Non-Believer

**Invitation to Breakfast** - The simple call of Jesus to his disciples in John 21 is "come have breakfast." Often, we can be intimidated by the grandeur of Jesus, God made flesh. Sometimes it's his call to discipleship, to take up our crosses and follow him, that can be intimidating. That's why this is one of my favorite passages in all of scripture. When God becomes flesh in Jesus, he becomes accessible to us. He is no longer a distant god who we try to appease through perfection. Instead, he reveals himself as our friend, our brother, who warms the charcoal fire and prepares the meal. Then his invitation is welcoming and even casual, "come have breakfast."

## Weekly Schedule Week 52

### Thursday-Saturday

**Read and Pray the text.**  
**Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:**

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly "ruminate" on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

**Work through the provided notes.**

### Monday-Tuesday

**Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.**

### Wednesday

**At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.**

### Additional Resources:

**Check out the wonderful work by Randy Harris on being a disciple of Jesus. This is a five part series entitled, "Electing to Follow Jesus." Available at:**  
<http://char.is/blog/2016/10/20/electing-to-follow-jesus-claiming-our-baggage/>

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**21:1** - "*Sea of Galilee*" (Gk. tiberias). Literally, "sea of Tiberias." This is the same as the Sea of Galilee.

**21:2** - "*sons of Zebedee*." This is James and John. See Mark 10:35.

**21:2** - "*two other disciples*." Obviously, John does not make it clear who these other two disciples were. It is probably that they are Andrew and Philip, who are mentioned together in John 6:7-8 and 12:22.

**21:7** - "*He had taken it off*" (Gk. en gar gumnos). Literally, "for he was naked." See note below.

**21:9** - "*Fire of burning coals*" (Gk. anthrakian). Literally, "charcoal fire." This ties back to John 18:18 where Peter was also at a charcoal fire, but in that instance he was denying he knew Jesus.

## Commentary

**Peter's Clothing** - The text literally says that Peter put his garment on because he was naked. "Peter's behavior here has been puzzling to many interpreters. It is usually understood that the Greek word γυμνός (gumnos, usually translated "naked") does not refer to complete nudity (as it could), since this would have been offensive to Jewish sensibilities in this historical context. It is thus commonly understood to mean "stripped for work" here (cf. NASB, NLT), that is, with one's outer clothing removed, and Peter was wearing either a loincloth or a loose-fitting tunic (a long shirt-like garment worn under a cloak, cf. NAB, "for he was lightly clad"). Believing himself inadequately dressed to greet the Lord, Peter threw his outer garment around himself and dived into the sea. C. K. Barrett (St. John, 580-81) offered the explanation that a greeting was a religious act and thus could not be performed unless one was clothed. This still leaves the improbable picture of a person with much experience around the water putting on his outer garment before diving in. R. E. Brown's suggestion (John [AB], 2:1072) seems much more probable here: The Greek verb used... does not necessarily mean putting clothing on, but rather tying the clothing around oneself (the same verb is used in 13:4-5 of Jesus tying the towel around himself). The statement that Peter was "naked" could just as well mean that he was naked underneath the outer garment, and thus could not take it off before jumping into the water. But he did pause to tuck it up and tie it with the girdle before jumping in, to allow himself more freedom of movement. Thus the clause that states Peter was naked is explanatory (note the use of for), explaining why Peter girded up his outer garment rather than taking it off – he had nothing on underneath it and so could not remove it." NET Bible, 21:7, fn 19.

**153 Fish** - John provides the exact details of the catch. It was not simply a nice evening's work, but it was an overwhelming harvest of abundance as the resurrected Jesus provides. Not only that, but the net was intact though it should not have been able to handle so many fish. The disciples are now prepared for the harvest for which Jesus has called them (John 4:34-38).

## Devotional Thoughts John 21:1-14

### Come to Breakfast

"My wife's maternal grandmother, until she died a centenarian, would call the family gathered at her house for holidays with a two-syllable word she would holler like no one else. In an East Texas drawl, she'd sing out, "Break..." in a low voice and "... fast" in a high sustained voice. If ever there was a matriarch around whom everyone wanted to be, it was Ma. And when she said, "Breakfast!" we'd drop what we were doing and come to the table for farm fresh sausage, bacon, biscuits, homemade jams, eggs, and strong coffee. One of the best resource books today for Spiritual Walk for Life 101 is *Living God's Love* by our friends Earl Lavender and Gary Holloway. At the end of one of the chapters the authors ask their readers to draw a picture of God. In response to their invitation to draw a picture of our view of God, I drew this scene from 21:1-14 with the caption, "Come to breakfast." I drew the lake, the sunrise, the fire. I sketched the old logs Jesus may have dragged up for them to sit on. The resurrected Lord made breakfast for his disciples... This lakeside scene draws me to the Father of Light and Love, the Holy Spirit Fire, and the Risen Son of Man. Friendship with God. Come to breakfast." Greg Taylor, *Daring Faith*, 183-184.





# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 21:1-14

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide 52

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### Opening Question

- What is your favorite breakfast food?

### In the Word: Read John 21:1-14

- Why do you think Peter and the disciples decide to go fishing?
  - Why is this so offensive to the high priest?
- In the last lesson, we talked about ancient recognition type-scenes. How does this text serve as a recognition type-scene?
  - What is significant about Jesus being recognized at the abundant catch of fish?
- What is the significance that this is the third time Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection?
- What is the significance that it was a charcoal fire that they cooked this fish on?
- This meal and conversation by the shore serves as the last setting for the Gospel of John. Why is it a perfect ending to John's account of the gospel?
  - How does this scene relate to others throughout the Gospel?

### In Our Walk

- Using your imagination, describe the scene of Jesus and his disciples eating breakfast by the shore.
  - How does Jesus' invitation, 'Come have breakfast,' echo to us today?
  - What things in our life often keep us from sharing a meal with Jesus?

### For the Non-Believer

- As we are finishing up working through the Gospel of John, how has your understanding of how to share the good news of Jesus changed?

### Closing Prayer

- Praise God for his relentless invitation to join him!



# The GOSPEL according to JOHN {John 21:15-25}

## Notes: Theme

**Peter** - The last time the text talked about Peter was around a “charcoal fire” as Peter was denying he knew Jesus (John 18). Once again around a “charcoal fire,” Jesus intentionally seeks out Peter to reclaim and re-create him. Just as Peter has denied Jesus three times, so Jesus asks Peter to affirm his love for him three times. Throughout John, Peter has shown deep commitment to Jesus without an understanding of who Jesus truly is and what he must do (see notes on 13:31-38). It is only after Jesus has been crucified and resurrected that Peter’s commitment, reestablished in love, is truly to the person and mission of Jesus. Now Peter not only understands, but partakes in this same identity and mission himself. When Peter confesses his love for Jesus, he now knows what that truly means.

**Philew & Agapaw** - A common misunderstanding of this text gives far too much attention to the difference in the Greek words Philew and Agapaw. Without getting too technical, John does use different words in his recounting of Jesus and Peter’s conversation. The first two times through, Jesus asks Peter, “do you agapaw *me*?” To which Peter replies, “I philew you.” The third time through Jesus switches and asks, “do you philew *me*?” Peter replies, “I agapaw you.” Some have seen an intentional theological distinction in John using these words, but astute scholarship reveals John is simply using different words stylistically as he does not consistently use either word throughout the rest of his Gospel. See *Additional Resources*.

**Dwell** - This often overlooked motif might be the most central theme in the Gospel of John (1:38-39; 4:40; 7:33; 11:54; 13:33; 14:17, 25; 16:4). In most of John, this motif has developed regarding the disciples remaining alongside Jesus in his earthly ministry. Yet, in his final discourse of John 14-15, Jesus deepens this concept to an intimate, personal mutual indwelling of Jesus through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (14:17; 15:4-10). The disciples are now the dwelling place (noun for remain) of God (14:23) just as the Father dwells within the Son and the Son within the Father (14:10). The disciples commune in the relationship of the Father and the Son through the Spirit. The beloved disciple then dwells within this relationship to end the Gospel.

## Weekly Schedule Week 53

### Thursday-Saturday

Read and Pray the text.  
Follow the Lectio Divina, if needed:

1. Read (Lectio) – Read slowly through the text.
2. Meditate (Meditatio) – Slowly “ruminate” on a word or thought.
3. Pray (Oratio) – Bring the word or thought honestly and openly before God.
4. Contemplate (Contemplatio) – Rest in the presence of God with the word or thought. No agenda, just stillness and intimacy.

### Sunday

Work through the provided notes.

### Monday-Tuesday

Take time to journal prayers, thoughts, or even your own commentary on the text. Work through the devotional thoughts on the reverse side.

### Wednesday

At LIFE Group, spend time in group discussion over the text.

**Additional Resources:**  
Check out Peter Krol’s wonderful assessment of the Greek words for Love used in John 21 @

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/a-little-greek-can-be-a-big-distraction>

For a more technical argument see [net.bible.org](http://net.bible.org), John 21, fn 31.

# DIG DEEP

## Text Notes:

**21:15** - "*Simon, Son of John.*" Though many manuscripts have "Simon, son of Jonah," the reading "Simon, son of John," is also well attested and the better option.

**21:15-17** - "*love*" (Gk. Philew/Agape). John stylistically changes between philew and agape throughout not only this text but all of his Gospel. See the notes on Agapew and Philew above.

**21:22** - "*remain alive*" (Gk. menein). Literally, "to dwell." See note above.

**21:25** - "*not have room.*" This final note by the author helps the reader understand that the stories that have been shared were specifically chosen as Jesus did more in his life than any book could hold.

## Commentary

**Who are these?** - In John 21:15, Jesus asks Peter "do you love me more than these?" Who or what are the "these" that Jesus is referring to? Scholars argue over three views. First, these are the items of Peter's old career as a fisherman such as his nets, boat, etc. This option is rooted in 21:3 where Peter can no longer wait for the resurrected Jesus and declares, "I am going out to fish." Thus, Jesus is asking Peter if he loves him more than his old way of life. Though this is an appealing way to preach this text, it seems oddly different than the rest of the Gospel of John. In John, Jesus is more concerned about provoking belief where people are at than calling them out of their occupation. Second, the these could be a reference to the other disciples. Jesus could be kind of gesturing to the other disciples and asking Peter who he loves more, the other disciples or Jesus. Still, it seems a bit absurd that the resurrected Jesus would ask Peter who he loves more, himself or the other disciples. Especially, as he is trying to teach Peter to love others. Third, Jesus most likely is asking Peter if he loves Jesus more than the other disciples love Jesus. Peter had been an outspoken disciple of Jesus who was constantly trying to prove his superior devotion and love for Jesus (John 6:68; 13:6-10, 31-37; 18:10-11). Yet, Peter had also denied Jesus three times showing his devotion was no greater than anyone else's (John 18:15-27). Now, as Jesus reestablishes Peter, he asks him a question that cuts into the heart of Peter's real devotion to Jesus.

**Sheep** - Undoubtedly, John ten is one of the vital passages for Jesus' self-understanding in John. In this lengthy dialogue immediately preceding the resurrection of Lazarus and arrival of Jesus' hour, Jesus teaches that he alone is the good shepherd (10:2, 11, 14) and the gate for the sheep (10:7). Jesus knows his sheep and will lay down his life for the sheep (10:15). As Jesus reestablishes Peter, he calls upon Peter to express his love for Jesus by taking care of the sheep. Connected with this dialogue, is the prediction of Peter's death (21:18-19). Just as the Good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep so must Peter.

## Devotional Thoughts John 21:15-25

### Dwell

Peter looks back at the disciple whom Jesus loves and asks, "what about him?" The English translation of this passage overlooks the significance of Jesus' response. He says to Peter, "If I want him *to dwell* until I return, what is that to you?" Jean Vanier captures the importance of the word translated dwell. "As we have seen, the word dwell is at the heart of the Gospel of John. It began with the two disciples asking Jesus, "where do you dwell?" Jesus answered: "come and see" (John 1:38, 39). This Gospel has led us "to dwell in Jesus," to become his beloved friends. The last word of Jesus in the Gospel is that the message of John will remain, or dwell, until the end of time when Jesus returns. This is the end of the Gospel of John. The sun is rising, the sun of hope, because Jesus is clearly the Light of the world, and he is calling us all to become his beloved friends" (The Gospel of John, the Gospel of Relation, 126-27). According to John, Jesus' desire for us as disciples of Jesus is threefold. First, believe in Jesus. Second, dwell with him. Third, love like him. The elements of this trifacta work together for holistic discipleship. Nothing more, nothing less. Is your discipleship defined by believing in him, dwelling with him, and loving like him?



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN 21:15-25

LIFE Group Discussion Guide  
Discussion Guide for Week 53

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### Opening Question

- When has someone loved you when you didn't deserve it?

### In the Word: Read John 21:15-25

- What is the significance of Jesus asking Peter, "do you love me," three times?
- Compare and contrast John 21:1-25 with John 18:15-18, 25-27. What details connect these stories?
- According to John, who are Jesus' sheep or lambs?
  - What is the relationship between loving Jesus and taking care of his flock?

### In Our Walk

- *The Gospel of John is about life. According to John, abundant life comes from believing in Jesus, dwelling with Jesus, and loving like Jesus. Answer the final three questions by reflecting on the last year in John. Give specific answers, refer to specific stories from John, and share specific moments in your life.*
- How did the Gospel of John help you believe in Jesus?
- How did the Gospel of John help you dwell with Jesus?
- How did the Gospel of John help you love like Jesus?

### Closing Prayer

- Thank the Lord for the magnificence of John's account of the good news of Jesus.
- Pray that we can better believe in Jesus, dwell with Jesus, and love like Jesus.



**The Gospel  
According to John**

Week 1 - John 1.1-18  
Week 2 - John 1.19-34  
Week 3 - John 1.35-51  
Week 4 - John 2.1-11  
Week 5 - John 2.12-25  
Week 6 - John 3.1-21  
Week 7 - John 3.22-36  
Week 8 - John 4.1-26  
Week 9 - John 4.27-42  
Week 10 - John 4.43-54  
Week 11 - John 5.1-15  
Week 12 - John 5.16-47  
Week 13 - John 6.1-24  
Week 14 - John 6.25-59  
Week 15 - John 6.60-71  
Week 16 - John 7.1-52  
Week 17 - John 7.53-8.11  
Week 18 - John 8.12-30  
Week 19 - John 8.31-59  
Week 20 - John 9.1-41  
Week 21 - John 10.1-21  
Week 22 - John 10.22-42  
Week 23 - John 11.1-27  
Week 24 - John 11.28-44  
Week 25 - John 11.45-57  
Week 26 - John 12.1-19  
Week 27 - John 12.20-36

**The Gospel  
According to John**

Week 1 - John 1.1-18  
Week 2 - John 1.19-34  
Week 3 - John 1.35-51  
Week 4 - John 2.1-11  
Week 5 - John 2.12-25  
Week 6 - John 3.1-21  
Week 7 - John 3.22-36  
Week 8 - John 4.1-26  
Week 9 - John 4.27-42  
Week 10 - John 4.43-54  
Week 11 - John 5.1-15  
Week 12 - John 5.16-47  
Week 13 - John 6.1-24  
Week 14 - John 6.25-59  
Week 15 - John 6.60-71  
Week 16 - John 7.1-52  
Week 17 - John 7.53-8.11  
Week 18 - John 8.12-30  
Week 19 - John 8.31-59  
Week 20 - John 9.1-41  
Week 21 - John 10.1-21  
Week 22 - John 10.22-42  
Week 23 - John 11.1-27  
Week 24 - John 11.28-44  
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Week 28 - John 12.37-50  
Week 29 - John 13.1-30  
Week 30 - John 13.31-38  
Week 31 - John 14.1-14  
Week 32 - John 14.15-31  
Week 33 - John 15.1-8  
Week 34 - John 15.9-17  
Week 35 - John 15.18-16.4  
Week 36 - John 16.5-15  
Week 37 - John 16.16-33  
Week 38 - John 17.1-5  
Week 39 - John 17.6-19  
Week 40 - John 17.20-26  
Week 41 - John 18.1-11  
Week 42 - John 18.12-27  
Week 43 - John 18.28-40  
Week 44 - John 19.1-16  
Week 45 - John 19.17-27  
Week 46 - John 19.28-42  
Week 47 - John 20.1-9  
Week 48 - John 20.10-18  
Week 49 - John 20.19-23  
Week 50 - John 20.24-29  
Week 51 - John 20.30-31  
Week 52 - John 21.1-14  
Week 53 - John 21.15-25

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