



The Gospel of John Core Group Study

A nine-week study on the gospel according to John. In this study, we will focus on the character and nature of Jesus.

Objective of the Study:

Our goal for this study is to equip the servant leaders with a starting point for Bible studies on the gospel according to John. This is a nine week study focused primarily upon the nature and character of Jesus.

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Week One: John 1:1-18

Objective

The goal of this week's study is to demonstrate Christ's preeminence. We are enabled to understand how to live our lives relationally, being now under the grace and truth of Jesus Christ rather than the Law of Moses.

Opening Questions

1. What is your favorite aspect of creation?
2. What is grace to you?

Body of the Study

In this study we focus upon the famous prologue of the gospel according to John. Other than John 3:16, this passage is by far the most important from John's narrative. This study will allow the group to focus on the preeminence of Jesus of Nazareth.

Not only is Jesus the Way to God, but he is also God made flesh. The end of the passage provides a relevant way to apply the Bible study to everyday life concerning the grace and truth provided through Jesus, as opposed to the rigid Law given to the Israelites through Moses.

John's parallel in this passage of the Genesis account was very obvious to his contemporary readers. The phrase "In the beginning..." would have immediately reminded his readers of the Creation account in Genesis. Another interesting part in this passage is the juxtaposition of darkness and light. Darkness is the absence of light. When light is introduced, it literally conquers darkness. Likewise, sin is the absence of life. Jesus came to conquer the darkness of sin by bringing the light of life. Through grace and truth, life conquers death.

Text Questions

Verses 1-5

1. What does the first verse remind you of, especially the phrase "In the beginning..."? Why do you think that John chose to parallel the Creation account?
2. Who or what is the Word that is spoken of in this passage? What does this name tell us about the figure of Jesus?
3. What do verses 4 and 5 mean?

Verses 6-9

4. What do you think about John's testimony concerning Jesus?
5. Do you think that John's testimony was harder then than our testimony is today, especially since Jesus had not yet died and been resurrected?



Verses 10-13

6. What does it mean to become children of God?
7. How does Jesus have the authority to grant the right to allow us to become children of God? What does this say about the figure of Jesus in relation to God?
8. How do we become children of God? What does it mean to be born of God?

Verses 14-18

9. What two things did the Word do? And what have we seen as a result? What are some examples you have of seeing the glory of God in your everyday life?
10. What is Jesus full of?
11. What does it mean to not be under the Law of Moses but be under the grace and truth of Jesus Christ?

Application Questions

1. How do we cultivate the intimate relationship we have with God, now that the Word has become flesh, having dwelt among us?
2. How should we live our lives relationally concerning the idea of grace and truth? If we are called to live as Christ, should our focus be on judgment or grace? What are examples of how things would look different with the focus being on one over the other?

Spiritual Exercise

Have the Core Group members exchange names to pray for one another outside, aware of the glory of God's creation. A focus for prayer can be specific instances of God's grace and truth in their lives recently. If history-giving has just ended, it will be a good time for them to continue to get to know one another.

Memory Verses

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." -John 1:14





Week Two: John 11:17-44

Objective

The goal of this week's study is to demonstrate that Christ is the resurrection and that Christ identifies with the sufferings of man.

Opening Questions

1. Have you ever been frustrated because someone did not show up when you needed them?
2. Have you ever been encouraged by someone showing up when you didn't think they would?

Body of the Study

The story of Lazarus provides different angles from which to view the character of Jesus. On the one hand, the passage illustrates God's ability to use all things for his good and for his glory. On the other hand, the passage illustrates Jesus as the resurrection. As demonstrated in the literal resurrection of Lazarus, we see that when we live through Christ, death has lost its power.

In this passage, we also find the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept" (verse 35). Whether he was weeping over the death of his friend Lazarus, or the suffering of Mary and Martha, we see that he identified with the sufferings of man.

Text Questions

Verses 17-22

1. Why do you think Jesus waited until Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days, when friends were already coming to comfort Martha and Mary?
2. Speculate as to why Martha went out to meet Jesus while Mary did not.
3. Why does Martha believe that Jesus' presence would have changed the events? Likewise, why does Martha declare that Jesus can receive from God whatever he asks?

Verses 23-27

4. Why do you think Martha further qualifies what Jesus spoke to her from verse 23?
5. How does her qualification limit the understanding of Christ as fully God?
6. Why does Jesus say that he is the resurrection? Might it be in response to Martha's qualification that Lazarus will rise in the resurrection on the last day?
7. Martha declares her belief that Jesus is the Messiah. Why? (see verse 26)

Verses 32-37

8. Why is Mary weeping at Jesus' feet? Is it just mourning, or does she believe that Jesus has let her down? Compare this to the reaction of the ones who followed her to Jesus (see verse 37).
9. Why was Jesus weeping?



Application Questions

1. In what areas of your life do you not believe that Jesus has the power to save, heal, and/or change? Are there areas in your life where you qualify or limit Jesus' statements?
2. What would life look like if you were to believe Jesus fully? Throw out some specifics.
3. Mary fell at the feet of Jesus. How do we place our burdens at the feet of Jesus?

Spiritual Exercise

Create a stone of Remembrance. Take a stone and write on it a time in your life when God healed, saved, and/or changed you. You may also want to include verses that relate. This is to model the Israelite practice of setting up stones of Remembrance after God demonstrated power, faithfulness, and provision to them, in order that they could encourage themselves and teach their children.

Memory Verses

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" John 11:25





Week Three: John 4:4-42

Objective

The first goal of this week's study is to demonstrate that salvation through Christ is not discriminatory; it is for all who believe despite life choices, race, gender, etc. The second goal is to understand our place in the harvest of the world and work of the Kingdom.

Opening Question

Do you find that you have trouble befriending people who are different than you are?

Body of the Study

From a historical standpoint, Samaritans were “half-breeds” who weren’t considered pure Jews. Thus, they were not allowed to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Furthermore, the fact that this woman goes to the well at noon shows that she is an outsider within her own community. Most women would go to the well in the morning, but this woman goes to the well in the heat of the day; she does not want to be seen drawing water from the well of Jacob. She is shunned by her community.

However, by the end of her discussion with Jesus, the woman runs into the town unafraid of others’ opinions of her in order to tell everyone that Jesus is the Messiah! Her declaration to the town illustrates that, through Christ, the woman is no longer ashamed of who she is and what she has done. She believes that Jesus is who He says He is.

The disciples, on the other hand, were confused upon returning to Jesus because Jewish men typically did not speak with women for extended periods of time, especially with a woman to whom a man was not married. Moreover, for a rabbi who was studying and teaching, spending too much time speaking with even his wife was considered a waste of time and shunned in Jewish culture (remember, Jesus was considered by many to be a rabbi). Therefore, Jesus is not only hanging out with a woman who is shunned by her community, but culturally Jesus should not have been speaking with the woman at all.

This meeting was a divine appointment for the purpose of progressing the woman’s view of Jesus from being equal to Jacob, to being a prophet, then to being the Christ. Jesus also used this for the purpose of drawing the entire town out to himself. Nevertheless, the disciples think on earthly terms, and they fail to understand the importance (for both the woman and the town) of Jesus’ conversation with the woman at the well. Jesus corrects the disciples and discusses the different roles of the harvest.



Text Questions

Verses 4-9

1. Why did Jesus ask the woman at the well for a drink?
2. See the Body of the Study for more information to ask contextual questions.

Verses 10-15

3. What is living water? Why will you never thirst if you drink living water?
4. What does the Samaritan woman mean when she asks, "Are you greater than our father Jacob?" (verse 12)? Does she know who Jesus is?
5. Does the woman, at this point, seem to understand what Jesus is talking about in regards to living water?

Verses 16-20

6. Why does Jesus ask the woman to get her husband? (verses 27-38)
7. How has the woman's view of Jesus transformed over the course of their conversation?
8. What is her description of Jesus to the town?
9. What do you think about the disciples' response? Put yourself in the place of the disciples. Do you think you would have given the same response in that situation?

Verses 39-42

10. Why did the Samaritans of the town believe that Jesus is the Christ?

Application Questions

1. How do you fit into the harvest, in light of verses 34-38?
2. It is clear by the Samaritan woman's reaction that Jesus speaking to her made for an uncomfortable situation from her view. Yet Jesus continued getting to know her and spoke life-giving truth to her. Who can you reach out to that, prior to this study, you may have been uncomfortable reaching out to?
3. The woman's concept of Jesus transformed over the course of her conversation with the Messiah. How has your view of Jesus transformed over the course of your life?

Spiritual Exercise

This week, practice getting to know those that you have a hard time befriending. Purposefully ask someone different than you to a meal or coffee this week and get to know their story!

Memory Verses

"Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'" -John 4:13-14





Week Four: John 13:1-17

Objective

The goal of this week's study is to demonstrate how Christ illustrates loving one another in humility through serving.

Opening Question

Think of a time when you have sacrificed for someone else.

Body of the Study

In Jesus' time, meals were eaten on the floor while reclining to their left. As people arrived for a meal, their feet were washed upon entering, which made the feet-washing ceremony in the middle of a meal by Jesus quite unusual. The mere fact that Jesus gets up after the meal was being served requires John to move and disrupts the flow of the Passover feast entirely. The disciples would have been further confused as Jesus, their rabbi and Lord, removes his outer garments and wraps a towel around himself, assuming the clothing of a menial slave.

From verse 16 of this chapter, it seems clear that the "master" is Jesus and the "servant(s)" are his disciples. Therefore the disciples cannot consider themselves greater than any task or service since their master, Christ, has humbled himself to perform one of the lowest of tasks, the task of a servant. Like the one who sends a messenger provides the message, Christ has provided the message of love and humility, and he sends out his disciples into the world to carry the message by continuing to live out the example of the Master.

Clean in this context implies being in relationship with Jesus, just like we are clean today through that relationship.

Text Questions

Verses 1-5

1. Would you have been able to eat with Judas? What does it say about Jesus that he was able to dine with Judas?
2. Jesus knows that he is about to die; why does he continue to trust the Father's plan?

Verses 6-8

3. Why does Peter question Jesus?
4. What does Jesus mean in verse 8? Does any relation to the cross come to mind?
5. How do you become clean?



Verses 9-11

6. What do you think of Peter's reaction? Why do you think he reacted like that? Look back at verse 9 to see the sharp disparity in Peter's reactions.

Verses 12-17

7. What does it mean to wash one another's feet?
8. Who is the servant and who is the master in this context?

Application Questions

1. How can we daily practice serving others in humility? What does humility mean to you?
2. Imagine sitting down to dinner and a friend, who has betrayed your trust, joins you. Would you be able to get up and wash their feet as an act of love and humility? How would you go about changing your heart towards your betrayer so that this act of service could be done in love and humility?

Spiritual Exercise

Take time to pray in twos or small groups. A focus for prayer could be about broken relationships or areas of forgiveness. Another idea is to wash one another's feet. All you need is a small washbasin, water, and a towel.

Memory Verses

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." -John 13:14-15





Week Five: John 5:1-15

Objective

The goal of this week's study is to illustrate that Jesus is the eternal healer.

Opening Question

Describe a time when you were sick and what it was like waiting to be well again.

Body of the Study

This week's passage is a short and upfront story about a seemingly random encounter between Jesus and a man with a disability. From the first look, it does not appear that there is much for us to apply to our lives outside of Jesus' last statement to the man in verse 14. It doesn't seem that Jesus is saying that you will be punished on earth for your sins. His implication that something worse may happen to this man, who has been disabled for 38 years, most likely implies an eternal consequence of our sin.

With that being said, there are many more things we can glean from this passage to apply. First, this encounter may be much bigger than the random encounter on a random day it appears to be. In order for this man to be healed, he has to have someone to pick him up and put him in the water. We speculate it was not his first time there, but had been there for the better part of three decades. Where were his friends and relatives for those three decades? Christ, in his matter-of-fact way, walks over and asks him if he wants to be healed. Then, Christ heals him, not because of any response the man gives which implies he is seeking healing or because of the man's declaration of faith... He just heals him. In fact, the man seems to answer more with despair than optimism. He just states why he cannot be healed. We can imagine the disciples in the background asking the same questions we ask: "Why this guy? Why the Sabbath day? Why not someone younger? Why didn't you heal everyone there?"

Through all of these questions, we miss what seems to be Christ's point. Even when we are alone in the midst of our suffering, he is there for our healing. Even when we think we know what's necessary for our healing, he alone truly knows how to heal us and with what tools. An encounter that lasted a few minutes and spanned a few hours between the man's healing and his later meeting with Christ at the temple changed the trajectory of a man's life. The man probably went on to tell others of his dramatic healing by Christ, and in turn the lives of others were transformed. This healing has eternal consequences. A man who was both physically crippled and eternally endangered was radically saved from the sad future of both. Christ's healings serve more than a worldly time frame.



Text Questions

Verses 1-6

1. Why do you think Jesus picked this man to speak to and ultimately heal?
2. Note verse 4 which is most likely at the bottom of the Bible page.
3. Why do you think Jesus asked him "Do you want to get well?"

Verses 7-9a

4. Why doesn't the man answer Jesus' question?
5. Why is the man laying there if there is no one there to help him?
6. Why do you think Jesus healed him the way in which he did?

Verses 9b-13

7. Why do you think Jesus slipped into the crowd?
8. Do the Jews seem more concerned with the healing or the breaking of Jewish law? What does this say about their priorities?

Verse 14-15

9. What does Jesus mean when He states that "something worse may happen to you"? Do you think this is a reference to what will happen in his life or in the eternal?
10. What about Jesus' statement makes the man want to go out and tell who his healer was?

Application Questions

11. Jesus asks, "Do you want to get well?" In what areas of your life do you not want to get well?
12. Do you think you have expectations of how you will get well, rather than trusting Jesus to know and reveal the way?
13. Can you think of friends or family in a similar situation to the man at the pool? How can Christ make a difference for them?

Spiritual Exercise

This week you all are encouraged to spend time in prayer for one another, especially if there are areas in your lives that need healing. We recommend "hot seat" style prayer or, if you have a large core group, praying in pockets.

Memory Verses

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." -Isaiah 53:5



Week Six: John 12:1-11, 20-36

Objective

The goal of this week's study is to demonstrate that Jesus is for today.

Opening Question

What are your primary and secondary needs?

Body the Study

Why did Mary anoint Jesus' feet? We are inferring from where this story is placed in the book of John (between the death and resurrection of Lazarus and the washing of the disciples' feet) that Jesus is giving the disciples a chance to understand before the last supper that to be a servant to the world you are only fulfilling a secondary need/call. You fulfill the primary need in your life by knowing and loving Him first and foremost. "You will always have the poor, but you will not always have me." Mary humbles herself in a way that the disciples don't understand, as evident through Judas' response. Jesus is not saying don't love and serve one another, nor stop meeting people's earthly needs, but that if you are not bringing people an eternal hope, you are missing the point.

Later, Jesus speaks to a crowd and his disciples about how he will soon be leaving them. However, His leaving will have value in the same way a kernel of wheat must die for many seeds to be born. He references His being lifted up and how it will draw many to Him. Also, He reminds them that where He is, there His servant will be also. While at this time, it was good for the disciples and people like Mary to spend their time with Him, we are now blessed by the presence of the Spirit. In the Spirit, we may travel all over the earth and still be present with God. Still, we must begin by being filled with the light, even becoming children of light, before we are able to share the light in partnership with the Spirit. Until we do this, which is addressing our primary need, we will only be leaving others in darkness like ourselves, however we try to help them.

Text Questions

Verses 1-11

1. Do you agree with Judas?
2. What does it mean when Jesus says, "You will not always have me?"
3. Why do you think that Mary anointed Jesus's feet?

Verses 20-29

4. What does the death of a kernel of wheat produce? (maybe bring in a kernel of wheat so they can see how small it is)
5. In verses 27-29 what does Jesus' declaration tell us about him and his knowledge of the things to come?
6. How do we go about being where Jesus is? What is the response of the Father?



Verses 30-34

7. What is Jesus referencing in verses 30-32?
8. In what way is the voice a benefit for the people? What does this say about God? 9. Who is the prince of the world? How is he driven out?
9. How was Christ “lifted up”? How does this draw men to Him?

Verses 35-36

10. What is the light that Jesus is referring to?
11. Do we have the ability to walk in the light now?

Application Questions

1. How do we often put Jesus in the place of the secondary need instead of the primary need in our lives and in the way we serve others?
2. Read verses 23-26. What does it mean to die to ourselves like the kernel of wheat dies? What does dying to ourselves produce? How is this similar to ‘the man who hates his life’ (vs. 25).
3. How do we live as “sons of light”? (vs. 36)

Spiritual Exercise

Worship in some way, shape, or form and also set up some way to serve as a body this week - maybe at a homeless shelter, food bank, or Meals on Wheels.

Memory Verses

“Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” -John 12:25





Week Seven: John 15:1-8

Objective

The goal of this week's study is to demonstrate that Jesus is the source of connection to the Father.

Opening Questions:

1. What does being fruitful look like?
2. What do you think are examples of good fruits?

Body of the Study:

This whole passage comes in the middle of Jesus's "farewell discourse". He knows He is about to die on the cross, and He imparts final wisdom on His disciples as well as prays for them. This section is one of the most well known images of Scripture, and relates to the many agricultural images Jesus uses throughout His ministry.

The idea of the passage is that we are nothing apart from Christ. He is the true vine and the Father is the gardener. What does this mean for our daily lives? How do we go about doing things through Christ? Christ says that to do this we must remain in Him, but how do we?

The answer seems to be through obedience to Christ's commands and through love. A mark of our love and abiding in Christ is producing good fruit. We can bear no fruit apart from Jesus because we are just one part of the whole. How can a branch do anything apart from the root? The Father prunes branches that bear no fruit, and not remaining in Jesus is like being a branch that is picked up from the ground and thrown into the fire. Remaining in Him looks like being part of a beautiful and healthy system from which good things come. This vine produces good things eternally as our eternal God is both the vine-tender and the vine, in the persons of God the Father and God the Son.

Text Questions:

Verses 1-4

1. What does it mean that God prunes the branches?
2. What happens when the branches are pruned?
3. What does Jesus say has made the disciples "clean"?

Verses 5-8

4. Apart from Christ, what can we do?
5. What does the text say happens to branches that do not remain in the vine? How does this parallel the eternal consequences of being/not being in Christ?
6. How is the Father glorified?
7. What does bearing fruit for God demonstrate to the world (vs. 8)?



Application Questions:

1. How do we remain in Christ daily?
2. What are some examples of good fruit, and how can we continue to bear it?

Spiritual Exercise:

Spend some time in silent meditation. Meditate on a verse from the study (like the memory verse), a past memory verse, a line from a song, or a praise you have.

Memory Verse:

"I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." -John 15:5





Week Eight: John 15:9-17

Objective:

The goal of this week's study is to show that Jesus is our example for love, and to learn why and how we love one another.

Opening Questions:

1. Do you obey your parents? Why is it difficult?
2. What does loving your friends look like?

Body of the Study:

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." One of the reasons Jesus was such an amazing example to man was that He perfectly followed the will of His Father. Imagine your Father asking you to die on a cross for someone else when you have done nothing wrong. Could you do that? Fathers, even godly ones, may not always ask us to do easy things. Because of Jesus' love for His Father, He obeyed.

Jesus commands us next, "love as I have loved you". It follows that He may not always ask for us to complete the easiest tasks. Yet, a parent calls on a child to obey because they know what is best for that child. Obedience is a blessing to that child, like when their parent tells them not to eat something that will make them sick. Likewise, when Jesus asks us to obey, see your obedience as the protection of a loving Savior trying to bless and care for you. When we obey Jesus, we remain under the protection of his love rather than in the danger of our rebellion!

Verse 10 is not referring to a conditional love. You can do nothing that would cause God to love you any more or less. However, by obeying God, we are remaining within His love by respecting the boundaries He has set before us, knowing they are what's best. This is a protecting love that we can choose to receive or not. By rejecting His love, we reject His advice and protection within it as well.

Text Questions:

Verses 9-12

1. How do we remain in the love of Christ?
2. What are the commands we are called to obey?
3. As we remain in Christ and obey His commands (which are the commands of the Father as well), what do we receive? (note: this is not a temporal joy, but an eternal joy - the joy of salvation. This joy is found in the promise that we will one day be with God eternally.)



Verses 13-17

4. How do we enter into friendship with Christ? How does this make our obedience to His commands of the utmost importance?
5. Why does Jesus tell the disciples that they are no longer considered servants?
6. What has been made known to the disciples?
7. What does Jesus mean when He states, "You did not choose me, but I chose you..."?
8. What is "fruit that will last"? Compare the statement, "...and appointed you to go bear fruit - fruit that will last" to the Great Commission in Matthew 28.

Application Questions:

1. How are you more like the friend, rather than the servant of the Lord?
2. How can you love one another more like Jesus has loved you?
3. How can you practically lay down your life for your friends?

Spiritual Exercise:

Put on worship music and have everyone be quiet as they think about how Jesus has loved them, and how they can love Him in return. Close in prayer, asking that they would help one another be like Jesus in love.

Memory Verse:

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." -John 15:12





Week Nine: John 21

Objective

To show Jesus as the complete restorer.

Opening Questions

What is a time that you felt completely restored? For example, after a goodnight's rest or walk in the woods or a God moment...

Body of the Study

This week's study concerns the final chapter in John's gospel. Here we get a picture of Jesus reappearing to the disciples who are waiting for him in Galilee. Things to note are:

1. The disciples are back to fishing. Is this because they don't want to have idle hands, or are they confused as to what has just happened and are going back to what they know?
2. The faith and exuberance of Peter. He literally jumps out of the boat upon realizing it's Jesus on the shore.
3. Breakfast. Jesus doesn't give them a sermon. He just chills and has some breakfast with the boys. What does this mean and how does it unbox Jesus?

Next we see the reinstatement of Peter. During the Passion scene, as we remember, Peter says that he does not know who Jesus is three times. Here, Jesus takes the broken Peter and reinstates him as the primary leader in the church which is going to be built soon. The discourse that Jesus and Peter have is truly amazing; Jesus reaffirms that He knows that Peter loves Him and encourages Peter to be the feeder of his sheep. However, strangely, after being reinstated Peter asks "Lord, what about him?" The answer Jesus gives is one that should be applied to all of our lives. "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

Why should Christ's decisions concerning others' lives affect what He has called us to do? Peter was given a reinstatement and a mission, and the first question that Peter asks is, "What about John, what are you going to do with him?" It's a great self-check for all of us. Think of exam season. How often do we ask: "God, why have you made it so easy on this person, and why doesn't that person need to study?" (or maybe you are that person!). We should not worry about why God blesses others differently than us, but we should worry about the commission that He has given to us specifically.



Text Questions

1. What does the fishing scene remind you of? (Reference Luke 5:4-7)
2. How has Peter changed since his last interaction of denying Jesus?
3. Why do you think Peter asked about the other disciple?

Application Questions

1. How can we position ourselves in such a way that we can literally jump out of our boat upon seeing God move somewhere in some way?
2. In what ways should we just trust God's judgment, and know that it is not up to us? (vs. 23)
3. How should our relationship with Jesus affect our view of others?

Spiritual Exercise

Have some time of reflection this week concerning how faithful God has been this past semester. This would be a good exercise especially if finals are coming up, to remember how God has been faithful in the past.

Memory Verse

"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have enough room for the books that would be written." -John 21:25

