

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

**DO THIS  
DON'T DO THAT**

**BEYOND  
RELIGION**

|                            |           |
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# Introduction

In a world saturated with religious systems, moral frameworks, and spiritual experiences, John's Gospel is radically exclusive in its claim: life—real, eternal, abundant life—is found only in Jesus Christ. The Gospel repeatedly contrasts mere religion—human effort, ritual, and outward forms—with a true, saving relationship with the living God. Nicodemus was a religious leader, yet still needed to be “born again.” The Samaritan woman had theological opinions and cultural traditions, yet still thirsted for living water. The crowds loved the miracles but turned away when the message demanded full surrender.

John wrote to help you discover who Jesus really is, and, in doing so, to find your truest purpose and direction in life. Religion may give you rules to follow; Jesus gives you a new birth. Tradition may keep you in step with others; Jesus brings you into fellowship with God Himself.

This is our opportunity to go beyond intellectual curiosity, beyond cultural Christianity, beyond religion—straight into the presence of the living God.

# Helpful Details

**Author:** The Apostle John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20, 24). He was part of Jesus’ inner circle along with Peter and James.

**Date Written:** Between A.D. 80–95.

**Purpose:** As he clearly states in John 20:31: *“That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”*

**Distinctiveness:** Roughly 90% of John’s material is unique compared to Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It emphasizes *theology* over *chronology*, focusing on meaning rather than merely recording events.

**The Seven “I Am” Statements:** Jesus reveals His divine identity through metaphors like “I am the Bread of Life” and “I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

**Key Themes:** Jesus as the eternal Son of God. Light vs. darkness. New birth and eternal life. Belief and unbelief. God’s sovereignty in salvation.

# Recommended Reading

Free Commentary (TGC)

Articles on John (Ligonier)

Sermons + Studies (Monergism)

Beginner Commentary: Let's Study John by Mark Johnston

Advanced Commentary: The Gospel According to John by D.A. Carson

# John 1:1-18

## MAIN POINT

Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God, became flesh to reveal God's glory, bringing grace and truth to humanity, offering salvation and reconciliation through His life, death, and resurrection.

## GROUP INTRO

What part of your life story makes it easier for you to extend grace to others?

## TEXT

1. Read verses 1-3. What do these verses teach us about the relationship between Jesus and God?

*Leader help: The Word (Jesus) is both with God and is God. This underscores the eternal relationship between Jesus and the Father, highlighting the distinctiveness of the Word while affirming the oneness of the Word and the Father. Jesus is not the Father, and the Father is not Jesus, but both are eternal, divine, and intimately and eternally in union.*

## 2. Read verses 6-12. How was Jesus received?

*Leader help: While Jesus, the true Light, came into the world He created, the world did not recognize Him (v. 10). Even though He came to His own people, the Jewish nation, they did not receive Him (v. 11). This rejection contrasts with the invitation given in verses 12-13: those who receive Jesus and believe in His name are given the right to become children of God. This shows us that it is one's response to and relationship with Jesus that determines whether they are adopted or rejected by God, not their moral goodness, religious performance, or ethnic identity.*

## 3. How does this passage connect to the themes of creation and God's revelation in the Old Testament?

*Leader help: John intentionally connects Jesus with Genesis 1:1. Just as God spoke creation into being through His Word in Genesis, in John's prologue, we learn that all things were made through the Word, who is Jesus. This emphasizes that Jesus is not only God's ultimate revelation but also the One who was present at creation, bringing the world into existence. Additionally, the concept of God revealing Himself to His people through the Law in the Old Testament finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus, who reveals God perfectly through His life, death, and resurrection. Jesus is the final and complete revelation of God to mankind, fulfilling the longing of the Old Testament to receive and relate to God.*

## APPLICATION

1. Is there a specific area of your life where you have been trying to earn God's love through your own efforts, rather than receiving the grace He offers through Jesus? How can you take a step toward resting in His grace this week?
2. Who in your life needs to hear about the light and hope that Jesus offers, and what's one tangible step you can take this week to tell them about that light?
3. How does the reality that Jesus is both truly God and truly man shape the way you relate to Him? How does the doctrine of the incarnation help you?

## PRAYER

Praise Jesus for who He is and all He's done for you.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Colossians 1:15-20***

Ask God to draw you deeper into the reality of His grace.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Ephesians 2:8-9***

Ask God to help you be more gracious every day.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Philippians 2:15-16***

# John 1:19-51

## MAIN POINT

John the Baptist testifies that he is not the Messiah but the forerunner, pointing to Jesus as the Spirit-anointed, sacrificial Lamb. Then Jesus chooses His disciples.

## GROUP INTRO

What's a part of your story that keeps you grounded, no matter how much you grow or succeed?

## TEXT

1. Read John 1:19-28. Why's it significant that John the Baptist denies that he is the Christ, Elijah, or the Prophet?

*Leader help: John's humility has him pointing away from himself and toward Jesus, opening the door for attention to be directed at the Lord. John knows his role is to prepare the way for Jesus (see verse 23, which cites a Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 40:3). John models the correct posture for all Christians: exalting Jesus and not self.*

2. Read John 1:29-31. How does John's description of Jesus (the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world) connect Jesus to the Bible's big story?

*Leader help: Since the events of Genesis 3, humanity has been at enmity with God because we love our sin and we reject our Creator. The title John gives Jesus draws from the Passover lamb (Exod. 12:3–13) and Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Isa. 53:7), revealing that it is Jesus alone who can stand as our substitute and take the wrath we deserve, once and for all (see Heb. 10:10–14). Not only this, but Jesus isn't the sacrifice that WE have provided; He is the sacrifice that GOD has provided for our benefit. Jesus is the long-awaited sacrifice who blots out the sins of His people.*

3. Read verses 32-34, where John says he saw the Spirit descend and remain upon Jesus. Explain why this matters and how this further clarifies the identity and mission of Jesus.

*Leader help: The Spirit's descent confirms that Jesus is the anointed Messiah from Isaiah 11. In that OT passage, this prophesied anointed one ushers in the new creation through His redemptive life and actions. Another passage that mentions the Spirit resting on God's anointed one is Isaiah 61. There, the prophet tells us that Jesus would come to bring good news and freedom. Jesus isn't just another prophet but the Son of God, empowered by the Spirit to accomplish God's long-promised redemption. This moment also highlights the role of the Triune God in salvation: the Father sends, the Son redeems, and the Spirit testifies and empowers.*

4. Read verses 35-51. As Jesus chooses His disciples, they refer to Him in various ways. What do these titles tell us about Jesus?

*Leader help: The titles "Rabbi," "Messiah," "Son of God," and "King of Israel" show that this is no ordinary teacher or leader, but is instead the One who fulfills all of the Old Testament's types, shadows, promises, and prophecies. Even Jesus's promise to Nathanael in verse 51 (that he'll see "heaven opened") points back to the story of Jacob's ladder (see Gen. 28), revealing that He is the one, true mediator between heaven (God) and earth (humanity). Salvation, knowledge of God, and access to heaven don't come through our religion and works, but through Jesus, who has come to us.*

## **APPLICATION**

1. Every day is an opportunity to live like John the Baptist, pointing people's attention away from us and toward Jesus. But, on a practical level, how do we do this? What are some ways we can help each other stop living self-focused lives?
2. In Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul makes the Lamb of God's redemption and salvation very personal. What might be different if you meditated on and truly believed that Jesus' loving sacrifice was for you?

3. The Lord doesn't just forgive our sins; He takes them away, like the "scapegoat" in Leviticus 16:7-10. This means we no longer have to bear our guilt and shame. Why, then, do you think some Christians have a hard time honestly confessing sin or seeking help for stubborn temptations? How can we change this in our group?

## PRAYER

Praise God for sending the Lamb who takes away sin.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Revelation 5:12***

Confess your self-centeredness, self-righteousness, or self-loathing to God and ask Him to help you rest in the Lamb of God instead.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Philippians 2:3-5***

Ask God to empower us to live as bold witnesses for Jesus, no matter what may happen to us.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Acts 1:8***

# John 2:1-25

## MAIN POINT

Jesus reveals His glory through His first miracle and zealously removes barriers to God.

## GROUP INTRO

Tell us about a time when you saw someone's humility make a tense situation better.

## TEXT

1. Read John 2:1-11. In His first public miracle, Jesus turns water into wine. Why are the quality and quantity of the wine significant, and how does this miracle point to Christ's restoring power?

*Leader help: When Jesus graciously blesses His sinful people, it is often above and beyond what we would expect. Jesus's ministry is far above what we could ever ask or deserve from God. Additionally, it would have been a shameful experience if those hosting this feast ran out of wine, so in providing for them, Jesus highlights His merciful, restoring power, which He uses to cover shame. The revelation of God's glory is in His gracious blessing and covering.*

*It's also worth noting that the jars of water would have been used for ritual external washing. The Jewish people would have washed their hands before every meal. But Jesus shows that He's here to offer true, lasting cleansing, from the inside out.*

2. Read verses 13-17. What does Jesus's claim that the temple is His "Father's house" tell us about Him, and why is this a radical claim?

*Leader help: Jesus isn't claiming to be a "child of God" in the general sense, as some might say today; instead, He is claiming to be the unique Son of God. And, as the eternal, divine Son of God, He has a zeal and passion for true worship, along with ensuring there is access to God.*

3. Read verses 18-22. In what way is Jesus's body a "temple"?

*Leader help: Jesus Himself is the very presence of God, and He is the very "place" where sinners meet with the living God. See also Hebrews 1:1-4.*

## **APPLICATION**

1. Where have you felt "empty" or ashamed in your current season of life, and how do you need Jesus to step in with His grace?
2. Jesus rid the temple of barriers between God and His people. What areas of your life might be serving as barriers to God?
3. John tells us in verses 23-25 that Jesus sees the motivations, desires, and thoughts that we can hide from others. Why, then, does the Bible call us to confess our sins not just to the Lord but to one another (see James 5:16)?

## PRAYER

Confess the sins, idols, or everyday activities you've allowed to come between you and God.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Hebrews 12:1***

Praise God for His overflowing grace.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Ephesians 3:20***

Bring your needs or the needs of other group members to the Lord.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Matthew 11:28***

# John 3:1-21

## MAIN POINT

The Apostle John shows us that Jesus's mission originates from God's love for sinners who cannot save themselves.

## GROUP INTRO

When in your life have you been truly known, flaws and all, and still accepted and loved? How did this impact you?

## TEXT

1. Read John 3:1-8, where the famous phrase "born again" comes from. Why is it necessary for human beings to be "born again" by the Holy Spirit?

*Leader help: We are spiritually blinded (thus, Jesus says "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God") and dead in our sins, unable and unwilling to move toward God in saving faith (see Eph. 2:1-6). The Spirit must come to us and cause us to be born again (see 1 Peter 1:3-5, 23). See also Rom. 3:9-18; Matt. 11:25-27.*

2. Read verses 16-18. What does John tell us about the natural position of humanity before God? How does this verse give more context to the phrase *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world"*?

*Leader help: Verse 18 says that human beings are already condemned or guilty before the throne of God. Jesus didn't need to incarnate to condemn anyone because this was already the natural position of humanity before our holy God. What humanity needed was a Savior.*

3. Read verses 19-21. What's meant by the words, *"The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light"*? Why is this the case?

*Leader help: We naturally crave and move toward sin and evil because our hearts are naturally bent away from God, rather than toward Him. Yet we know, because we're made in the image of God and have a conscience, the difference between right and wrong, and we know deep down we are guilty. Therefore, we don't want to come to "the light," i.e., to Jesus, because we don't want our evil exposed. Like Adam and Eve in the Garden, we run from God's presence, expecting Him to crush us in our guilt. Instead, God had to move toward us.*

## APPLICATION

1. What are some events or actions in your life that have caused you to feel like God doesn't love you? How can verse 16 reshape our understanding of God's affections towards us?
2. How does the idea of new birth (i.e., "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God") affect how you approach evangelism? Do you find this frustrating or freeing?
3. If you're a Christian, what has changed since the Spirit gave you spiritual sight to "see the kingdom of God"?

## PRAYER

Thank God for His unfailing love for you.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Lamentations 3:22***

Pray for those who remain in the darkness of unbelief.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Romans 10:14-17***

Ask God to root you in His love.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Ephesians 3:14-18***

# John 3:22-36

## MAIN POINT

True joy can be found in leading others to behold Jesus for who He is and what He's doing in the world.

## GROUP INTRO

What's the difference between being faithful and being impressive, and which one do you naturally lean toward?

## TEXT

1. Read verses 22-30. Why are John's disciples worried about people going to Jesus, and how does John respond?

*Leader help: John's disciples fear that Jesus is taking away their followers, which reflects a selfish concern for status. John, however, rejoices that his role as a friend of the Bridegroom is fulfilled when people go to Jesus, showing that true Christian ministry isn't about personal platform building, but is instead about gladly pointing others to Jesus.*

2. Looking at the same verses again, in what sense is Jesus the “bridegroom” and how does this connect Jesus to the Old Testament?

*Leader help: Jesus, being the Bridegroom, fulfills the Old Testament promises in which God reveals Himself as the Bridegroom of His people (see Hosea 2:19–20; Isaiah 62:5). This reveals Jesus’ divine identity and covenant love for His people. John sees himself not as the center, but as the “friend of the Bridegroom” (like a best man) whose joy is fulfilled by Christ’s coming. This underscores the gospel truth that our salvation is secured by God’s loving initiative, not ours.*

3. Read verses 31–36. Here, we have two basic responses to Jesus. What are these responses, and what are the results of each response?

*Leader help: The two responses are trusting in Jesus (“believes in the Son”) and rejecting Jesus (“whoever does not obey the Son”). Belief in the Son results in eternal life, but rejecting Him leaves one under God’s abiding wrath. God’s Word reveals His wrath against sin, and the gospel freely offers life through faith in Christ alone. The verse emphasizes both the exclusivity of Christ as Savior and the urgency of responding to Him, as God’s wrath is not merely a future possibility, but a present reality for the unbeliever.*

## **APPLICATION**

1. Where in your life and ministry do you find it hardest to decrease so that Christ might increase? Influence you have, credit you feel you should receive, people you’ve disciplined?

2. In verse 36, we read, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life." How has the Holy Spirit changed your view of Jesus's commands?
3. Some people don't outright reject Jesus; they're indifferent or apathetic toward Him. What are some loving and humble ways we can overcome this barrier when interacting with unbelievers in our lives?

## PRAYER

Confess the ways you've tried to make your ministry, service, or giving about yourself instead of Jesus.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Philippians 2:3-4***

Ask God to help you rest in the testimony of Jesus, who has brought grace and truth to us.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Hebrews 1:1-2***

Praise God for freely giving you eternal life, and pray for those who don't currently trust Jesus.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Romans 1:16***

# John 4:1-42

## MAIN POINT

Immediately after reading that “God so loved the world,” Jesus shows us what that looks like by stepping outside the borders of Judea to bring a Samaritan woman into the faith. Jesus shows us a pattern of truth leading to grace.

## GROUP INTRO

What has helped you see others through with mercy instead of judgment?

## TEXT

1. Read John 4:1-10. How does the phrase “gift of God” in verse 10 challenge conventional understandings about how someone receives God’s favor?

*Leader help: Historical and conventional understandings of receiving God's favor always go back to some form of “God responds to human actions.” Grace, on the other hand, is God’s goodness toward us despite man’s actions.*

2. Read verses 11-19. How is Jesus fleshing out His role as “the light of the world” in this interaction? Why does He highlight this woman’s sin?

*Leader help: It would be callous and unloving of Jesus to leave this woman in her sin and unbelief. To meet this woman where she’s at and show her the grace of God, He reveals her sin so that she might recognize her need and her deep-down desires that only Jesus can satisfy. In confronting her sin, Jesus has the opportunity to reveal Himself so that she might trust Him and be reconciled to God. The fact that Jesus “had to” come to Samaria for this one sinful woman magnifies the grace and mercy of God.*

3. Read verses 27-42. Jesus is okay with breaking customary cultural barriers to spread the gospel amongst unbelievers.<sup>1</sup> In these verses, we see the payoff of Jesus’ actions. Based on the woman’s testimony and the Samaritans’ response, how does God spread His truth, and how do people come to faith in Christ?

*Leader help: Her testimony led others to seek Jesus themselves, but ultimately they believed because of His Word. God uses our witness, but faith rests on hearing the gospel (Romans 10:17). The progression from “borrowed faith” (“because of her testimony”) to personal conviction (“we have heard for ourselves”) highlights that salvation comes only through encountering Jesus for oneself.*

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<sup>1</sup> Jews avoided Samaritans, and rabbis typically did not engage in public dialogue with women. Jesus will not allow the gospel to be confined by social conventions that aren’t aligned with Scripture.

## APPLICATION

1. There's a simple invitation ("Come and see" ) given by the Samaritan woman (v. 29). What is she inviting others to come and see? What *must* be included in our evangelism, and what is optional?
2. Jesus says that believers worship God in "spirit and truth." How would someone know if they're actually doing this? What mindset, actions, or words does this include?
3. In light of Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman and our core value of "Unity in Diversity," how do we invite people to "Come and see Jesus"? How are we tempted to slip into "Come and be like us"?

## PRAYER

Take time to praise Jesus for the ways He has satisfied your deepest longings.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Psalm 42:1***

Ask God for courage, wisdom, and a genuine love for others that will empower evangelism.

***Passage to guide your prayers: 2 Corinthians 5:14***

Bring sin to the light and ask for God's forgiveness.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Colossians 1:13-14***

# John 4:43-54

## MAIN POINT

John's shown Jesus bringing the gospel to a Jewish leader, an outsider, and now a Roman government official, revealing the missionary heart of God for all kinds of sinners. To be a Christian is to accept and believe Jesus's Word.

## GROUP INTRO

Who's helped you trust Christ when your hope was worn thin by hard experiences, and what did they do or say that helped?

## TEXT

1. Read verses 43-45. John tells us that Jesus essentially proclaimed that He wasn't trusted and followed in His own hometown.<sup>2</sup> How do these verses reinforce the biblical teaching about humanity's natural posture toward Christ?

*Leader help: It seems reasonable to assume that those closest to Jesus were the first to trust Him, but the opposite is actually true; Jesus's own family rejected Him, as did those who knew Him before He officially began His ministry. This shows us that our natural disposition is to oppose and distrust Jesus, even if we're very familiar with Him, the Bible, or Christianity in general. God must give us new hearts.*

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<sup>2</sup> See also Matthew 13:53-58.

2. Read verses 46-54. John tells us that this is a record of Jesus's second sign. What do we learn about the Lord and His heart for sinners in these verses?

*Leader help: Among other things, we learn:*

1. *Jesus's love extends beyond the ethnic and national boundaries of Israel. He graciously heals a Gentile's son.*
2. *Jesus has authoritative power over the effects of sin, including physical illness.*
3. *Jesus isn't interested in miracle-seeking fans; He challenges the mentality of those seeking miracles without actually trusting Him.*
4. *Jesus is incredibly merciful. He did not owe healing to this man's son, but gave it as a gift.*
5. *Jesus is Lord. No matter a person's social status, they must come to Him in humility and faith.*

3. In the midst of His interaction with the official, Jesus announces, "Unless you [plural] see signs and wonders you will not believe." Read verses 50 and 53. How does this Gentile demonstrate genuine trust in Christ, and what results from his faith?

*Leader help: The official comes in desperation, seeking a miracle. Jesus challenges superficial miracle-seeking (v. 48), yet the man responds by taking Jesus at His word and leaving. Genuine faith is not grounded in visible proof but in trusting the Word of God. This man's entire family is transformed because of his faith.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> It's reasonable to assume that this man shared what he knew about Jesus with his family, and they believed in Jesus based on this report, along with the miracle.

## APPLICATION

1. In this passage, Jesus challenges the crowd because of their discipleship, which is driven by a desire for miracles. However, later in the Gospel, Jesus warmly welcomes Thomas and invites him to touch His wounded, resurrected body to dispel his doubts. How do you disciple someone who has crossed from needing Christ's reassuring presence into fickle miracle-seeking?
2. This Gentile took Jesus at His word. Which biblical truths are easy for you to hold, and which are challenging for you to accept?
3. Being vocal about Christ's merciful displays of power can open doors for the gospel to be proclaimed. Let's discuss practical ways to transition from sharing Christ's miracles in our lives to gospel proclamation. What stands in the way of you doing this? What concerns come up in your mind?

## PRAYER

Pray for grace to honor Christ rightly as Lord, not just to admire His power.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Colossians 1:15-18***

Praise Jesus for His mercy toward you.

***Passage to guide your prayers: 1 Timothy 1:15-16***

# John 5:1-18

## MAIN POINT

Jesus mercifully heals a man, authoritatively giving him true Sabbath rest in an act that confronts the religious legalism of His day.

## GROUP INTRO

What do you think is the difference between resting *from* something and resting *in* Jesus?

## TEXT

1. Read John 5:1-8. Why did Jesus deliberately heal on the Sabbath, and what does this reveal about His divine identity and mission?

*Leader help: By healing on the Sabbath, Jesus confronts the legalism that prized rule-keeping over mercy. Jesus doesn't break God's Law, He fulfills it, bringing the true Sabbath rest that the Law anticipated (see Matt. 11:28–30 and Heb. 4:9–10). Jesus then uses this opportunity to equate His activity with God's ongoing divine work of sustaining and redeeming creation (verse 17). The leaders knew that this was a claim of equality with God. Even though the Son shares the Father's authority and power, they want to kill Him for violating their man-made regulations and for His claims.*

2. In some translations, verse 4<sup>4</sup> is left out of this passage because it isn't included in the earliest manuscripts of John 5. In any case, the disabled man in this passage must have believed he could receive healing by lying in the pool. Read verses 6-9. What does Jesus accomplish by asking this man, "Do you want to be healed?"

*Leader help: His question exposes the man's hopelessness and misplaced trust. The man focuses on his inability to reach the pool rather than on the Lord who can truly heal him and give him rest from his suffering. In this way, this interaction is like a picture of our tendency to seek healing or rest through rituals, superstition, or self-effort rather than seeking Jesus.*

*It's also worth noting that Jesus freely and graciously seeks out this man and gives him healing, which shows the Lord's kindness.*

3. Read verses 9-18. What do we learn about both Jesus and God the Father from Jesus's statement in verse 17?

*Leader help is on the next page.*

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<sup>4</sup> If the verse was included in the ESV, it would read, "...waiting for the moving of the water; 4 for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had."

*Leader help: We learn that the Father's work didn't stop after the six days of creation in Genesis 1-2, but continues through His ongoing providence and redemption. Not only this, but Jesus is the eternal, divine Son who is actively participating with God in upholding the universe and bringing reconciling redemption through His perfect life, His atoning death, His resurrection, and His ascension. Though God "rested" from creation, He has never rested from sustaining the world or from bringing His saving purposes to completion (see Ps. 104:27–30; Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17).*

## APPLICATION

1. Where do you sometimes look for help or hope apart from Jesus, and how does this passage call you back to Him as your source of true rest?
2. The man in this passage was disabled for 38 years before Jesus showed him mercy. In times of extended pain and suffering, what's helped you keep hoping and trusting?
3. Jesus equates sin and suffering in verse 14. Although not all suffering is caused by sin<sup>5</sup>, sin will always lead to suffering. How have you personally learned to keep killing sin in your own life?<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See John 9:3 for proof of this.

<sup>6</sup> Christians are commanded to "put to death" sinful desires, motives, thoughts, actions, and words (see Col. 3:5-10).

## PRAYER

Ask God to help you trust His power and compassion even when all hope seems far-gone.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Romans 8:31-39***

Thank Jesus for His mercy toward you, celebrating the specific ways He has healed or renewed you.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Psalm 9:1***

Ask God to make you a person who initiates acts of mercy.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Luke 10:37***

# John 5:19-47

## MAIN POINT

Jesus's works, word, and witnesses all reveal His eternal unity with the Father, divine authority, and fulfillment of Scripture. Those who respond to Him in faith will receive eternal life.

## GROUP INTRO

Who in your life has lived in a way that clearly honors Jesus, and what stands out about them?

## TEXT

1. Read verses 19-23. What exactly does Jesus mean when He says, "The Son can do nothing of His own accord," and does this make Jesus "less than" God the Father?

*Leader help: Jesus here reveals His perfect unity with and submission to the Father and the mission with which He's been sent into the world. Jesus isn't independent from the Father (or the Spirit). This statement is not a denial of divinity but an affirmation of divine equality and distinction. The Father, Son, and Spirit act together in all divine works. This is also a peek into what's called the "active obedience of Christ." Jesus's perfect submission and humble obedience are necessary for our salvation because our first representative, Adam, failed to perfectly obey God, and so do we. If Jesus doesn't live perfectly for us, we're utterly hopeless.*

2. We sometimes drift into thinking of “eternal life” as something in the distant future, but Jesus presents it differently. Read verses 24-26. When do Christians receive eternal life, and how is this lived out in this broken world?

*Leader help: Jesus proclaims that eternal life begins not at death but at the second someone trusts Him (i.e., “hears my word and believes”). Christians have “passed from death to life,” right here, right now. So, eternal life is both a present possession (we begin to experience God’s transforming presence and power) and a future reality (we’ll one day receive new, sinless bodies and live in a renewed creation with God and all His people).*

*We live our lives here and now by faith in Jesus, who loves us (see Gal. 2:20), which means we daily pursue His will, engage with His Word, and embed ourselves amongst His people.*

3. Read verses 30-46. Why do these leaders fail to trust Jesus even though they’re serious students of the Scriptures, and how does this expose the difference between knowing the Bible and knowing Christ?

*Leader help is on the next page.*

*Leader help: At the heart of their failure to trust Jesus is their refusal to do so (verse 40). This is a moral failure on their part. They do not want to come to Jesus because that would mean abandoning their self-righteousness, admitting their sins, repenting, and turning to someone outside of themselves for salvation. Their confidence is in their knowledge, traditions, and moral performance, not in the One to whom the Scriptures point. Jesus reveals that true understanding of God's Word requires a new heart.*

*Atheists don't exist because there's not enough evidence, but because we're dead in our sins and committed to suppressing the truth about Jesus.*

*Genuinely "Christian" Bible study will lead to adoring, trusting, communing with, and repenting to the Lord of whom the Scriptures speak (see Luke 24:27, 32; 1 Cor. 2:14–16)*

## **APPLICATION**

1. The divine Son of God didn't try to tackle life without time to commune with the Father. How's your prayer life? What's been healthy and good, and where are you struggling?
2. There's always a danger related to studying the Bible: we can gather info about Jesus without truly enjoying and obeying Him. Let's brainstorm how to dive into the Word in such a way that it leads to worship.

3. Re-read verse 24. There are people in your life right now who aren't just "too busy" for church or "uninterested"—they're spiritually dead, and the only thing that will bring them life is hearing the gospel and trusting in Jesus. What's preventing you from proclaiming the gospel to others, and what will you do to remove these barriers?

## PRAYER

Pray for deeper dependence upon the Father.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Psalm 37:5***

Admit to Jesus the ways you've "studied" Him and His Word instead of enjoying and obeying Him.

***Passage to guide your prayers: John 14:23***

Ask God for a renewed awe of Him that spurs you toward love, evangelism, and holiness.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Psalm 1:1-2***

# John 6:1-21

## MAIN POINT

Jesus is revealed as the divine Shepherd who provides for and protects His people, satisfying our deepest longings and bringing us back to the Father.

## GROUP INTRO

When have you seen God do something surprising with the little you brought to Him?

## TEXT

1. In verses 1-15, John highlights a sign Jesus performed. What does Jesus's miraculous feeding of this crowd reveal about His identity and mission?

*Leader help: Jesus is the divine provider who meets His people's needs abundantly—echoing God's miraculous provision of manna in the exodus (see Exod. 16). The crowd's recognition of Him as "the Prophet" (v. 14) points back to Deuteronomy 18:15–18. Yet Jesus isn't just a provider, He is the provision, the very Bread that comes down from heaven (as He will reveal in verse 35).*

2. Read verses 12-15. Why does Jesus leave when He perceives that the people want to make Him king?

*Leader help: Jesus defines His own purpose and ministry rather than allowing anyone else to set boundaries or parameters for Him. It's likely that the crowd seeks a political messiah who will meet their physical needs and overthrow the oppressive Roman government, but Jesus' kingship is spiritual, redemptive, and rooted in the cross. Their warped priorities reflect our natural desire for earthly security and triumph instead of our greatest need: salvation from sin.*

3. Read verses 16-21. What is revealed about Jesus when He walks on water and calms His disciples in the midst of their fear?

*Leader help: First, it's important to note that verse 20 could be translated in part, "I I AM, fear not," which points back to the moment God revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Here, Jesus is revealing Himself to be the great I AM; He is Israel's God in the flesh. His walking on water shows His sovereign power over creation and reveals that He is Lord of creation (see Job 9:8 and Ps. 77:19), not just a prophet or miracle-worker. The fact that He calms His disciples reveals the character of God: He is merciful and gentle, seeking to help us in the midst of our fear.*

## APPLICATION

1. God created us to be needy and dependent, but pride works against our nature, causing us to want to live independently of God. How has God used your fears, weaknesses, sin, or shortcomings to grow your awareness of your dependence upon Him?
2. What are some ways you personally seek to mold or manipulate Jesus so that He fulfills your agendas and expectations?<sup>7</sup> If this isn't something you struggle with, how do you see the culture around us trying to use Jesus for agendas that aren't His?
3. The disciples had the advantage of Jesus's physical presence in the midst of physical danger. How is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit greater than this, and is this your experience in the midst of danger?

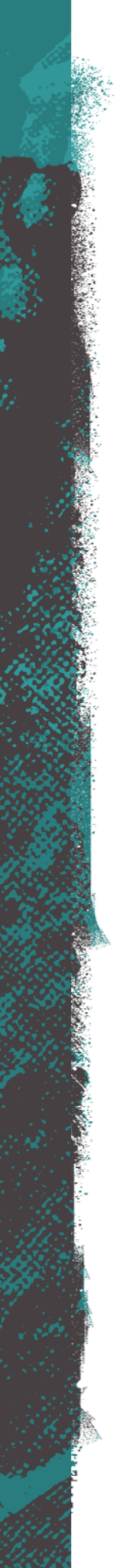
## PRAYER

Thank Jesus for fulfilling and satisfying you, and ask Him to help you enjoy Him even more.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Psalm 23***

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<sup>7</sup> This could be: *political*, trying to make Jesus a representative of either conservative or liberal priorities; *emotional*, trying to make Jesus your therapist who always seeks to make you feel differently rather than your Master; *self-centered*, trying to keep Jesus as your "co-pilot" or life coach, who's available to fulfill your life goals.



Admit to God your distrust, ingratitude, and discontentment with what He's provided. Ask for His help to be content and joyful.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Hebrews 13:5-6***

Ask God for His peace-creating presence and power for yourself or others who are crushed by fear.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Psalm 46***

# John 6:22-71

## MAIN POINT

Jesus declares Himself to be the true Bread from heaven who gives eternal life to those who believe. Many disciples turn away, unable to accept that salvation depends wholly on God's grace through faith in the crucified Christ.

## GROUP INTRO

What's something you've had to unlearn about following Jesus that was based more on *earning* than *trusting*?

## TEXT

1. Read verses 35, 48-51. What's the significance of Jesus calling Himself "the Bread of life," and how does this connect Him to the entire biblical story?

*Leader help: Jesus uses the image of bread, which was the staple of daily life in this time, to reveal that He alone sustains true life. Just as Israel received manna from heaven (Exod. 16), Jesus is the ultimate, heavenly provision from the God for our greatest need (salvation from sin and death). To "eat" His flesh and "drink" His blood means to trust in His person and saving work, specifically His death on the cross (v. 51).*

2. Read verses 41-59. Why do Jesus's words cause the Jewish leaders to grumble and many disciples to turn away?

*Leader help: They stumble over the offense of grace and Jesus's claims of divinity. Jesus's insistence that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws them (v. 44) exposes human inability and the necessity of sovereign grace. Their grumbling echoes Israel's unbelief in the wilderness. Notice also that there's a progression in their unbelief: they go from seeking Jesus only for food, to grumbling/murmuring, to outright rejection of Jesus. True disciples are those whom the Father draws and who persevere because Christ keeps them.*

3. Read verses 60-71. What does Peter's confession reveal about Jesus, and how did he come to this conclusion about the Lord?

*Leader help: Peter's reply shows faith that's the result of the Holy Spirit working within him; he recognizes Jesus as "the Holy One of God," revealing that he trusts Jesus has everything they need in and of Himself because He's the long-promised Messiah from God. Only those given by the Father (v. 65) remain because they see Christ as eternal life itself. It wasn't viewing signs or proximity to the "things of God" that caused this faith; it was God working.*

## APPLICATION

1. In what ways do you seek satisfaction in success, comfort, or recognition/praise from others?
2. How can spiritual depletion/exhaustion/depression reveal areas of our lives where we've been eating "food that perishes"?
3. What are the areas of your life where God's sovereignty feels uncomfortable (maybe the lack of salvation for loved ones, personal suffering, or obedience)? How can we help one another respond with trust rather than grumbling?
4. When our faith is unpopular or costly (maybe socially, or in the business world, or in your family), what has helped you remain steadfast?

## PRAYER

Thank Jesus for being enough.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Isaiah 55:1-3***

Ask God to supply you with humble, strong faith.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Proverbs 3:5-6***

Ask the Lord to draw unbelievers to Himself.

***Passage to guide your prayers: John 17:9***

# John 7:1-52

## MAIN POINT

Jesus travels to Jerusalem to attend one of Israel's most popular feasts, where He boldly confronts skepticism and unbelief while offering the life-giving Holy Spirit to all who believe in Him.

## GROUP INTRO

What does being 'missional' mean to you, and how have you seen it lived out well?

## TEXT

1. The Feast of Booths was the most popular of the three Jewish "pilgrimage feasts." During this feast, people traveled to Jerusalem for a week-long celebration and stayed in a small booth built from branches and leaves. Since it was popular, Jesus's unbelieving brothers mockingly suggested He travel to Jerusalem to perform miracles. With this in mind, read John 7:1-13. What's significant about the reasons Jesus gives for refusing His brothers' suggestion?

*Leader help is on the next page.*

*Leader help: Jesus's ministry, which was leading ultimately to His death on the cross, is constrained entirely by God's timing and purposes, not by anyone else's appointments. Here, Jesus tells His brothers that, for them, any time is the "right time" to do whatever they want because they're not submitted to the will of the Father and instead belong to the world. But Jesus is operating on an itinerary that's entirely subjected to the God whom the world hates; therefore, He'll go to the feast when the Father appoints it. This shows that, for Jesus, even seemingly insignificant decisions were surrendered to the Father. In this way, Jesus is like the man from Psalm 1 who "walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers."*

## 2. Read verses 14-31. How does Jesus describe the source and nature of His teaching, and what does this reveal about His identity?

*Leader help: The Jewish crowd is amazed that Jesus, who didn't go through the formal study and training of the time, can teach so powerfully, but Jesus responds by indicating that His teaching comes not from rabbis who preceded Him or from respected Jewish tradition, but from God Himself. Therefore, Jesus's teaching is utterly truthful and authoritative. Essentially, Jesus is claiming to be God's authoritative "mouthpiece" or Word. What Jesus says is what God says.*

3. On the last day of the Feast of Booths, the Jewish High Priest would fill a container with water and walk around the temple's inner court while the temple choir sang Psalms. This ceremony commemorated God's provision of water while the Israelites wandered the desert for forty years<sup>8</sup>. Knowing this, read verses 37-52. What is Jesus promising, and to whom are these promises made?

*Leader help: Theologian D.A. Carson thinks verses 37-39 are connected to a scene in Nehemiah 9:15, 19-20, where God's mercy, presence, Spirit, and miraculous provision are all celebrated. What Jesus is promising here, then, is God's mercy, presence, Spirit, and miraculous, soul-satisfying provision to all who trust in Him. This is a radical claim from Jesus, equating belief in Him with the Old Covenant saints' trust in Yahweh. It's also important to note Jesus's words: those who believe are those who receive. This isn't about religious works or being a good person, but trusting Christ. The life-giving, freely-given Spirit will be within all who trust in Jesus, and will work through them to bring life—through gospel proclamation and discipleship—to others. Imagery that connects water and spiritual satisfaction/life is present throughout the Old Testament: Isa. 55:1; Isa. 58:11; Ezek. 47:1-12; Prov. 4:23.*

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<sup>8</sup> See Exodus 17 and Numbers 20.

## APPLICATION

1. When we feel spiritually “parched,” we are not called to “do more,” but to come to Christ Himself. How are you doing with keeping some margin in your life so that you can be with the Lord?
2. Christians are living temples from whom the Spirit flows. Think over the last month. Did you spend more time refreshing others with the truth and grace of Christ, or did you drain others with self-centeredness?
3. Much of Christianity is about *appropriating* what’s actually true. We’ve been buried with the Lord and raised to new life, so we’re called to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God through our union with Jesus<sup>9</sup>. What makes it difficult for you to think of yourself as dead to sin and alive to God? How can we help one another renew our minds in this area?

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<sup>9</sup> Rom. 6:8-13.

## PRAYER

Praise Jesus for the ways He has satisfied you.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Psalm 16:11***

Bring to God the areas of your life where you're discontent, stressed, or self-focused, and ask Him to change you through the work and power of His Spirit.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Ezekiel 36:25–27***

Ask God to help you live this week with more God-centered intentionality, purpose, and selflessness.

***Passage to guide your prayers: Romans 6:15-18***