


THE GOSPEL OF JOHN





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Introduction

The Gospel of John is more than a record of events—it's an inspired invitation. From its opening lines, John calls us to behold Jesus, the eternal Word made flesh, and to believe in Him for eternal life.

John organizes his account around seven miraculous signs from Jesus:

1. Water into wine at Cana (2:1-11)
2. Cleansing the temple (John 2:13-22)
3. Healing the royal official's son (4:46-54)
4. Healing the man at Bethesda (5:1-15)
5. Feeding the five thousand (6:1-15)
6. Healing the man born blind (9:1-41)
7. Raising Lazarus (11:1-44)

Together, the signs form a spiritual roadmap, guiding us step by step to behold Jesus in His fullness, culminating in the ultimate signpost: Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead.

Will you stand on the sidelines of life, wandering according to your own compass, or will you respond to the signposts John provides, and come and see for yourself who Jesus is, what He's accomplished, and how to enjoy Him forever?

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 1:19-34

MAIN POINT

John the Baptist testifies that he is not the Messiah but the forerunner, pointing to Jesus as the Spirit-anointed, sacrificial Lamb who takes away sin, calling us to behold Him with faith.

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.

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 1:35 - 2:11

MAIN POINT

Throughout His ministry, Jesus reorders that which was out of order, making the fullness of God's blessing visible. God doesn't discard what He's created; He makes it new.

GROUP INTRO

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

TEXT

1. Read John 1:35-36. What's the significance of Jesus being called "the lamb of God"? Or, to ask it differently, what is John saying about Jesus when he uses this title?

Leader help: This was the same proclamation John the Baptist made in John 1:29. "Lamb of God" reinforces Jesus' ministry of reconciliation, wherein He will reconcile sinners to God through His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection.

2. Read John 1:43-50, then read 2 Samuel 7:12-13. Thinking back to our study on 2 Samuel, what is implied when Nathanael says to Jesus, "You are the King of Israel"?


Leader help: The Jewish people would have remembered that a promise was made to David that his son would sit on Israel's throne forever. Nathanael is likely referencing this promise, thus identifying Jesus as the "anointed king" or Messiah who will reign and rule forever.

3. 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 and above what we could ever ask or deserve from God. 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.

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?

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2. Sometimes we feel the need to overcomplicate evangelism. Read John 1:40-42. Here, Andrew tells his brother he found Jesus, and then brings him to the Lord. How can we contextualize this and do something similar for those we know who aren't yet Christians?
 3. In light of the miracle Jesus performs, let's review Scripture's view of alcohol together. Read the passages below and discuss how we can disciple one another to faithfully follow Jesus without giving into legalism or sin.

Proverbs 20:1

Ecclesiastes 9:7

Isaiah 5:11-12

Psalms 104:14-15

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

PRAYER

Praise God for His overflowing grace.

Passage to guide your prayers: Ephesians 3:20

Confess the ways you've tried to be your own king.

Passage to guide your prayers: Luke 6:46

Pray for someone who doesn't know Christ.

Passage to guide your prayers: Acts 17:30-31

John 2:12 - 3:15

MAIN POINT

The temple of Jesus's time was the place where people went to meet with God. But Jesus is the true temple where God meets with us. And rather than creating barriers to entry, as the money changers did, Jesus breaks down all barriers to meet with us.

GROUP INTRO

What spiritual habit or rhythm brings you the most joy?

TEXT

1. 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. He has a zeal and passion for true worship that belongs only to God.

2. 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.

3. 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.

APPLICATION

1. Jesus rid the temple of barriers between God and His people. What areas of your life might be serving as barriers to God?
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. 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

Praise Jesus for securing your place in God's family.

Passage to guide your prayers: 1 John 3:1

Ask God to bring new birth to someone in your life who doesn't yet worship Him.

Passage to guide your prayers: Hebrews 2:2-4

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

Passage to guide your prayers: Hebrews 12:1

John 3:16-36

MAIN POINT

In this section that holds one of the most well-known verses of all time, the Apostle John shows us that Jesus' mission originates from God's love, not in an attempt to make God love us. This Jesus, who will be lifted up, both on the cross, in resurrection, and in ascension, is lifted up by John the Baptist in exaltation.

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 verses 16-18. What does John tell us about the natural state of humanity? 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. Jesus didn't need to be incarnate to condemn anyone because this was already the natural position of humanity before our holy God. What humanity needed was a Savior.

2. 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.

3. Read verses 22-29. In your own words, explain what John the Baptist means in verses 29-30. How does this change our view of ministry and success?

Leader help: If Jesus is the bridegroom, then those who are considered His friends find great joy in hearing His voice. John had been proclaiming about a Messiah who was coming; that Messiah is now here, and John hears His voice. To lose his disciples to Jesus is a blessing. It is the bridegroom calling in His friends to witness His covenant with His bride (the church). Therefore, John can gladly say "He must increase, but I must decrease." We can hold our ministries loosely. If people are pointed to Jesus, we have succeeded, even if they don't stay with us. The "success" is them staying with Jesus.

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. 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?
3. 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?

PRAYER

Thank God for His unfailing love for you.

Passage to guide your prayers: Lamentations 3:22

Recognizing that Jesus views His people as His "bride," confess to Him the ways you've sinned against other believers whom He deeply loves.

Passage to guide your prayers: Revelation 19:7

Pray for those who remain in the darkness of unbelief.

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

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.¹ In these verses, we see the payoff of Jesus’ actions. What does the woman’s testimony and the Samaritans’ response reveal about how God spreads His truth and how 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.

¹ 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