

**21 DAYS
IN THE
GOSPEL
ACCORDING
TO JOHN**



Desert
VINEYARD CHURCH

GET TO KNOW **JESUS**

We invite you to spend 21 days reading through the Gospel according to John. It used to be said that it takes 21 days to form a new habit. Current research estimates that new behaviors actually take 66 days (on average) before they become a habit. Either way, we know that repeating a new—even difficult—behavior eventually leads to that behavior becoming a part of our lifestyle.

In church, the habit of daily reading the Bible is often referred to as a spiritual discipline. We choose these disciplines not for the sake of developing better habits or more self-control, instead we choose to read and study the Bible as a way of learning about and connecting with God. It might help to picture yourself in your relationship with Jesus. Wouldn't you like to get to know him better?

Use this simple guide to read and discover more in one chapter per day.

JOHN CHAPTER 1

In chapter one we are introduced to Jesus by name—many names, in fact. Word, Jesus, Christ, Lamb of God, Son of God, Rabbi, King of Israel, Son of Man. Each name helps to reveal part of his character as the anointed savior, teacher, leader, and God we need.

Consider what names and characteristics you already know for Jesus and which you would like to know more about. In a time of prayer, you might introduce yourself to Jesus and ask him to do the same.

JOHN CHAPTER 2

After the introduction of Jesus and some of the first disciples in chapter one, we meet his mother Mary and witness Jesus' first miracle in chapter two. An endless amount of study could be done and countless jokes have been told about this miracle of changing water to wine at a wedding, so it may be difficult to find the lasting importance of this story in the twenty-first century. The plain answer can be found in verse 11, "What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him." As you continue to read through the Bible, references and guides can be very helpful but, the plain text is often enough to develop your faith. Why not ask Jesus how he is revealing his glory today so that you will believe? What sign is he giving to you?

JOHN CHAPTER 3

Perhaps you can relate to Nicodemus; you have seen enough of Jesus to believe he has come from God but still have a lot of questions about the idea of being “born again.” The discussion of heavenly and earthly things, light and dark, condemnation and salvation can be just as confusing for us as it was for him. Jesus is talking about the reality of the Kingdom of God breaking through into this reality. He broke the barrier and joined our world when Jesus was born a man; now he offers us new life in the Kingdom if we believe.

One important way we demonstrate our belief is through baptism. Can you see how this is an expression of being “born again?” Now that you have chosen to believe, you might think about baptism as well.

JOHN CHAPTER 4

The new life we experience with Jesus requires both physical and spiritual nourishment. As you reflect on the woman at the well, consider ways you might be like her. Do you have things you are not proud of in your life? Do you have basic needs that it seems so difficult to have met? Are you a little surprised Jesus would want to talk with you? Are you brave enough to tell others that you have met the Messiah?

We learn from Jesus that our spiritual hunger can only be met by doing the will of God. Have you shared your regrets and needs with Jesus? Have you thought about sharing Jesus with someone you know?



JOHN CHAPTER 5

Chapter five opens on a man in a desperate situation who has been trying to experience God's help for years, but always seemed to just miss what he needed. Then Jesus walks over and brings help in a radical way—not at all what the man expected, and completely anonymously. Later, this man encounters Jesus again and learns who he is.

Sometimes we look for God in the wrong place or miss the fact that the helping hand we received was from God. Often it takes meeting Jesus again and learning more about him for us to recognize his work in and around us. Even then, the idea of a personal encounter with the living God is a radical one.

Jesus is challenged again and again by the religious leaders of his day and continues to be challenged some 2000 years later. While Jesus is widely accepted as an historical figure and influential teacher, many continue to debate his claim to be God. Here Jesus clearly states his relationship to the Father and authority to heal according to the will of the Father. Jesus goes on to distinguish himself from other respected and influential men as the Son of God and fulfilment of promises and prophecies found in scripture.

Have you settled this debate in your heart about whether Jesus is God or not? What questions do you still have? Are you looking for answers by learning more about Jesus?

JOHN CHAPTER 6

Did you notice in verse 60, "this is a hard teaching"? You are almost a week into this study and things may be getting hard to understand or the "habit" may be getting harder to keep, but it is right here that Jesus invites the disciples to go deeper. He encourages them—and us—not to be satisfied by an ordinary meal meant only to last temporarily. Rather, to get in touch with the spiritual hunger that only Jesus can satisfy.

This goes beyond appreciating what Jesus has done for us, and invites us to appreciate him. Jesus acknowledges that the disciples follow him because he feeds them bread, but he asks them to follow because he is bread. If you are struggling with this metaphor, be encouraged to take your struggle to God in prayer rather than to walk away as many of Jesus' early disciples did.

Who is Jesus to you? How can you show your appreciation?

JOHN CHAPTER 7

Jesus encounters opposition throughout his years of ministry, often for breaking the established religious laws. Here in Chapter seven we see that obeying the heart of the law is what is important to Jesus. Healing, for example, not only benefits the one who is healed but brings glory to God; therefore, how could it be against the law of God? The Jewish leaders had fallen into the same trap modern Christians often do. In an effort to obey God, we create a structure of rules to follow. Rules, though, can often exclude people—and even God—from a life of worship. Leaning in to the Lord through study and prayer can help us understand the heart of God's laws and how best to follow Jesus.

Consider the new rules you might make for yourself since choosing to become a Christian. Do these rules help you bring glory to God—do they reflect God's heart and character?

What about others in your life? Do your new rules harm or exclude others? If there is not a healthy reason to keep others away, how might you redefine rules to include them?

JOHN CHAPTER 8

Jesus continues to face hostility from the Pharisees. In each of the scenes in chapter 8 Jesus is making more and more clear his identity and authority as the Son of God, yet the Pharisees—the very teachers of the law—are baffled. They accuse Jesus of being crazy and possessed. They did not recognize the truth because their preconceived notion, their idea, of God and of the Messiah did not match the person of Jesus before them.

Have you heard someone tell you about Jesus, but at the time it sounded crazy? Does some of what you read and hear, even now, sound a little far-fetched? Or perhaps others tend to look at you as if you are a bit ridiculous when you talk about Jesus?

Consider that you, or those you are talking to, might have an idea of God that is getting in the way of recognizing the truth about God. Is that idea of God something you are willing to give to the Lord in prayer so that the truth can be seen more clearly?

JOHN CHAPTER 9

How many times have you seen someone dealing with hardship and wondered who was at fault? It is a natural question, and one the disciples ask of Jesus when they encounter a man blind from birth. But Jesus assures them that this hardship is an opportunity for God to display his work. The truth is that we all have imperfections and hardships in life, including a spiritual blindness. Jesus has come to heal us of this blindness as he reveals himself to us just as he does to the blind man at the conclusion of the chapter. Every hardship we face is an opportunity for God to be at work in our lives.

What area of your life could use some healing or revelation? Have you asked God to help in that area?

JOHN CHAPTER 10

Throughout this chapter of John, and in many other places in scripture, Jesus refers to himself as a shepherd and his followers as sheep. Notice how he describes the job of a shepherd as a leader and protector of the flock. The sheep, in turn, know his voice. They trust and follow their shepherd. Note the other characters Jesus describes: a hired hand who abandons the flock, a wolf who comes to harm the flock, and the Father who loves the shepherd for choosing to lay down his life to protect the sheep. We want to learn to hear and follow Jesus, to not be fooled by trusting someone else with our lives, to accept his protection from things that cause harm, and to trust the love of the Father just as Jesus did.

What steps have you taken to learn to hear and follow Jesus? Is there an opportunity you have not taken lately or an issue you have a hard time trusting God with? Who might help you in the learning and trusting process?



JOHN CHAPTER 11

You may have heard the story of Jesus and Lazarus before, or the short and moving verse 35, "Jesus wept." They form an incredible snapshot of both Jesus' humanity and divinity. It can be hard to imagine Jesus as fully human, experiencing grief over the loss of a friend. Equally difficult, at times, to understand that Jesus is fully God, capable of completely restoring life to Lazarus after several days in the grave. It is both qualities that make Jesus our miraculous messiah, God with us. This tension of two extremes coexisting is present throughout scripture and evident in the way we are called to walk out our faith. Like Martha, we have hope in a fully redeemed future while, like Mary, we exercise belief in the possibility of present miracles. You will likely find one extreme easier to lean into than the other, but like the pedals on a bicycle, we need to press into each in turn so that we can continue to move forward in our faith.

Have you ever wondered about how Jesus could be both human and God? Do you find it easier to believe that God can do a miracle right now or that God's way will win out in the end? Have you asked Jesus to teach you about these things?

JOHN CHAPTER 12

The profound miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead became a turning point in the ministry of Jesus. More and more people came to believe that Jesus was the messiah. So many believed that the chief priests began to earnestly plot the death of Jesus. Jesus predicts his death and tries to put it in context for his followers, though even his closest disciples did not really understand. With 2000 years of history between ourselves and this event, it sometimes seems impossible that one could walk alongside Jesus and not grasp what was happening. In fact, we often imagine that we would more easily comprehend so much if only he were right here with us. The truth is that the Holy Spirit is available to us every day, to help explain these mysteries and shed light on the dilemmas we face in our daily lives.

What understanding could you pray for today?

JOHN CHAPTER 13

We do not need to be very well off to recognize that washing another's feet—particularly in the ancient world—is not typically an act of honor performed by the most honorable among us. You can almost hear the shock in Peter's voice echo through the ages when he asks Jesus, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" (verse 6) The humble position that Jesus takes to wash the feet of each disciple would be similar to that of the King of England bowing before you and offering to sweep your floors. It is a profound paradox that Jesus explains is the example of leadership we are to follow. That he serves his friends in this way is a big deal, but it is made even bigger as we read the rest of the chapter when Jesus reveals that he knows the betrayal and denial they will take part in this night.

It is so common to take a position of superiority whenever possible and to only give of ourselves to those we think deserve our time. Do you withhold your time or money, your talent or gifting, from those you find undeserving? How do you judge them to be deserving? Here Jesus sets the example of humbly serving those who could never deserve such service from the Son of God. He freely gives of himself. In what ways could you become more generous with those you used to view as undeserving?

JOHN CHAPTER 14

In this chapter, Jesus makes some important promises that can bring us comfort and stability throughout our lives. He promises that he is preparing a place for us—we can have hope for eternity. Jesus also promises to come again and that while he is away the Holy Spirit will be with us—we don't have to go through life alone. Between these promises Jesus explains, "I am the way and the truth and the life." (verse 6) Whatever guardrails and guidelines we find in scripture to help us navigate life in a healthy way, relationship with Jesus is at the heart of Christian living. As you reach this point of reading and studying the Bible for a couple of weeks, are you beginning to grow a relationship with Jesus? Have you shared more of your life with him in prayer? Have you asked his Spirit to help you understand the difficult passages of scripture and the difficult circumstances in your life? If not, perhaps today is the day to begin. And if you have, be encouraged to know that every disciple of Christ is on a journey of discovery and devotion that continues throughout our lives until we meet him face to face.



JOHN CHAPTER 15

Imagine Jesus walking with his disciples knowing that he has very little time left. He is keenly aware that this is one of the last conversations he will have with them. Perhaps they are walking near a vineyard and Jesus uses what they see to explain again the relationship between Father, Son, and believer. Jesus passionately paints the picture of the sustaining connections of branch to vine and gardener. These loving relationships include pruning and cutting away excess and unhealthy parts. They also include the promise of care and provision with an awareness that there will be difficulties.

Finally, Jesus talks about the fruit of the healthy branches—we have a job to do in this life. At the end of the chapter, Jesus begins to share that job with his disciples: “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”

What would it mean for you to testify about what Jesus has done in your life? Or maybe how God has cared and provided for you? A great first step is to take some time to think about these questions and thank God in prayer and praise. Then consider sharing with someone at church, in your small group, or perhaps a family member who might have prayed for you in the past. Finally, when you meet someone struggling with something that God has mended in your life, you might share with them the hope you have because of Jesus.

JOHN CHAPTER 16

Who is Jesus to you? How can you show your appreciation?

Recall a couple of weeks ago when we were introduced to Jesus, in chapter one, using various names that revealed his character. Similarly, Jesus now uses the different names of Advocate and Spirit of Truth to begin introducing his disciples to the idea of the Holy Spirit. Jesus assures his friends that his Spirit will comfort and guide them through the difficult days ahead. Jesus also makes clear to them that they can ask whatever they need of the Father, and that God will answer out of love and wanting the best for them. Here we see Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all cooperating to provide for those who believe.

Notice verse 33: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” So often our tendency is to assume that when something is easy, we must be blessed and that when it becomes too hard, perhaps it is not God’s will. This verse says, instead, that life will be tough, but we can find peace in the truth and advocacy of God.

Do you find yourself seeking God’s truth and advocacy to overcome your troubles? In what situation have you lost heart? Could you call on Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to intervene today?

JOHN CHAPTER 17

These prayers of Jesus for his disciples and for all believers are so beautiful. Today, just take the time to read them again. As you do, consider that these prayers are spoken for you, by your Savior, and to your Father God. Perhaps you could read them aloud, take a pause to reflect after every few sentences, or read from a different translation of the Bible. These practices can help you to hear and understand the ancient words of scripture in a fresh way, or to dive deeper into the heart and meaning of a passage.

- What words or ideas stand out to you?
- How does it make you feel?
- How can you use what you have heard?
- How might you pray for, or help, someone else?

JOHN CHAPTER 18

In chapter 18, we learn that Jesus is not only arrested and questioned by the Roman government, but he is betrayed by his own people. First Judas leads the guard to him in the garden, then Peter claims not to know him, and finally the crowd of Jews demands the release of a criminal instead of Jesus. It is truly remarkable that Jesus would have invested years of compassion, teaching and ministry with the disciples knowing they would eventually betray him. Peter, in particular, behaves in a way familiar to many of us. He defends Jesus, then runs scared, he follows Jesus (but at a distance), then denies knowing him.

Have you been betrayed like this by someone close to you? How did you react? Have you treated Jesus this way? How do you think Jesus will handle the betrayal?



JOHN CHAPTER 19

Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above (vs 11)." Pilate, Caiaphas, Judas, the crowds, the centurion guard, all had a hand in the crucifixion of Jesus, but none without the full participation of God. The sentence and sacrifice of Jesus, innocent and blameless, was the plan all along. A plan for our salvation. In chapter 19 alone, we see the fulfillment of four separate prophecies foretelling about Jesus, the Messiah. Have you ever considered that the crucifixion was a part of God's plan? That God could allow evil people to commit terrible acts, but with a positive outcome? Or that small acts by unbelievers can be proof of God's larger plan?

When soldiers gambled for Jesus' clothes, it fulfilled Psalm 22:18, "They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment." When Jesus says "I thirst," in verse 28 and is given vinegar, this is a fulfillment of Psalm 69:21. Verse 37 is a fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10: "they will look on me, the one they have pierced", referring to the soldier who stabbed Jesus in the side with a spear. And then, in verse 36, we read that none of Jesus' bones were broken. This refers to the scriptures in Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 about the Passover lamb, the spotless sacrifice. Jesus is the Passover lamb, salvation for the whole world, if only we believe.

How does reading about the fulfillment of prophecies increase your belief? What parts of this are still very confusing? Have you found a mentor or group to talk with about confusing ideas of faith?



JOHN CHAPTER 20


As we near the end of the book of John, we are reminded of the beginning, “In him was life” (John 1:4). The tomb is empty, and Jesus has defeated death and sin. His resurrection is our salvation. Praise God!

Remember that in chapter 18 we read of the ways Peter and the other disciples betrayed Jesus? We wondered how he would handle the betrayal. Now some of the answer can be seen in the way Jesus personally greets and identifies himself to each one in the days following his resurrection. Jesus remains as he has always been, in loving, personal relationship with the disciples. And John makes sure he extends the invitation of Jesus to each of us in verse 31: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

JOHN CHAPTER 21

Imagine yourself in this scene, working hard at your job with little to show for it. Suddenly an old friend and mentor gives you a word of advice and everything changes. That friend invites you and your coworkers to a barbecue on the beach and you enjoy spending time together again, but inside you know there is a betrayal that has not yet been addressed. When your friend was in need—of a reference, a character witness, a kind word, your comforting presence—you denied any relationship. That must have been something of what Peter was feeling. Then Jesus turns to Peter and, three times, asks if he truly loves Jesus. Three times, Peter had denied Jesus and now, three times, has the opportunity to confess his love for Jesus. Oh, how sweet to see our friend Peter completely restored! And what else does Jesus say? “Follow me.”





At every step of the journey of faith, the invitation from Jesus is to keep following him. What will you do next as you follow Jesus?

- Consider how you might serve others (feed my lambs...care for my sheep). You can find more information about joining a serve team at desertvineyard.org/serve or at the Welcome Spot at church on the weekends.
- How will you continue your new habit of regular Bible reading? A study Bible or Bible app are helpful tools to keep going. The You Version Bible App is free on all platforms and has multiple translations of the Bible and devotional studies to encourage further study.
- Connecting with others is an important way to work through questions and grow in understanding along the journey of faith. We offer a variety of groups and studies where you can learn with friends, or individual Spiritual Care for more focused growth. Learn more at desertvineyard.org or at the Welcome Spot on weekends.
- Keep attending our Sunday gatherings at 9am and 11am, and keep up with the messages when you are unable to attend at desertvineyard.org or Desert Vineyard Church on YouTube.

Or talk with our Next Steps Director about where to go from here!

Elena Brockway 661.945.2777
ebrockway@desertvineyard.org