
John

Theme Verse

John 20:31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. (NKJV)

Reason for the Book of John

The purpose of this gospel is twofold: apologetic and evangelistic.

- As an **apologist**, John's desire was to convince his readers of Jesus' true identity, namely the "Son of God," emphasizing His deity.
- As an **evangelist**, John stated that he wrote his gospel so people would believe Jesus is the Son of God and have life through Him (**John 20:30-31**). The word "believe" occurs approximately 100 times in this one book!

John wrote his gospel so that people would receive Jesus Christ by faith and have life through His name (**1:12-13, 3:16, 20:31**). To accomplish this, John selected certain stories and miracles which help people believe in Jesus (**20:30, 21:25**).

Son of God - Deity

The gospel of John presents Jesus as the Son of God:

- Emphasizing His Deity (**John 1:1, 1:14; 8:58-59; 10:30-33**)
- Recording many of Jesus' "I am" claims. Jesus said "I am" the bread of life (**6:35**); light of the world (**8:12**); door of the sheep (**10:7**); good shepherd (**10:11**); resurrection and life (**11:25**), way, truth, and life (**14:6**); and true vine (**15:1**)
- Presenting many witnesses that Jesus is the Son of God: John the Baptist (**1:34**),

the apostles (**1:49; 6:69; 20:28, 20:31**), others (**9:35-38, 11:27**), and even Jesus (**10:36**)

Jesus left no room for question regarding His authority and His identity. His claims of being the "bread of life" and "light of the world" fueled the religious leaders' fire of wanting to kill Him. Jesus didn't back down! One time, Jesus said He was the "I AM" (i.e. Jehovah, the Jews' most sacred name for God, **8:58-59**). Another time, Jesus said He and God were one, which meant He was equal with God (**10:30-33**)

Ways the Gospel of John is Different

The gospel of John shows a picture of Jesus unlike the other gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, and Luke, together, called the "Synoptic Gospels").

The gospel of John does not include stories like Jesus' birth, temptation, or even parables. John includes stories not found elsewhere, such as:

Story	Chapter
Jesus' early ministry in Judea	1-5
first miracle	2
resurrection of Lazarus	11
prayer for His disciples	17
meeting at the Sea of Galilee	21

Jesus and the Apostles

Notice Jesus' deep relationship with His followers and His friends.

The gospel of John contains the fullest description of Jesus' instruction and prayer the night before He died ([John 13-17](#)).

The Apostle John had a special relationship with Jesus. Five times, he is called the apostle "whom Jesus loved" ([13:23](#); [19:26](#); [20:2](#); [21:7](#); [21:20](#)). John was next to Jesus at the Last Supper ([13:25](#)), was the only apostle at the cross ([19:26](#)), and was

entrusted with the care of Jesus' mother ([19:27](#)).

Jesus prepared His followers for what was to come. He warned them about persecutions, explained the details of His ensuing death, and assured them He would not leave them alone.

Personal Reflection and Application

Read [John 1:1-5](#), [1:14](#) several times. What do these verses mean? What do these verses mean to YOU, personally? How does knowing these truths help you live with confidence?

In [John 3](#), Nicodemus went to Jesus at night probably because he was afraid that others might see him talking with Jesus and the repercussions that might bring. Are you afraid to meet with Jesus and claim His identity for fear of what people might say? If so, pray and ask God to give you the courage to live out your faith publicly.

[John 3:30](#) records John the Baptist's famous statement, referring to Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Pray and ask God to make that your daily prayer!

In [John 4](#), the woman at the well tried to steer the conversation with Jesus to discuss "religion" and "tradition." Jesus boldly replied that true worship involves "spirit" and "truth." Have you allowed "religion" and "tradition" to cloud your worship of Jesus? In what ways? Do you worship in the way that God desires? What changes will you make to your life to please God in your worship?

Jesus is the master communicator. Sometimes He speaks in pictures and metaphors. Other times He speaks authoritatively and boldly. Notice how He speaks to the people in [John 4-5](#) and to you

today. How does the Father speak to you through Jesus' words, as a compassionate Heavenly Father encouraging you or as a disciplinary dad needing to boldly rebuke you?

[John 6:66](#) says, "many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more" because Jesus' teachings were difficult to accept and believe. Are you unwilling to follow ALL of Jesus' commands? What is keeping you from FULLY surrendering your life to Him?

Read [John 9:20-23](#). What, if anything, hinders you from giving God the credit for the good in your life?

[John 10:14](#) says that Jesus, the good Shepherd, really knows us. He knows us inside and out ([Psa 139](#)). Understanding His deep knowledge of YOU, pray to Him authentically today. Bare your heart and soul to the One who knows you the best!

In [John 11](#), Jesus' friend Lazarus died. After hearing about His friend's passing, Jesus waited two more days before coming to visit. He purposefully delayed. Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters, couldn't grasp why Jesus delayed. Are you in a delay period right now? Are you waiting for God to answer your prayers? Take time to pray, asking God for His perspective on the delay.

John 12 records when Mary, who just witnessed Jesus raise her brother back to life, broke an extremely expensive bottle of spikenard to anoint the feet of her Master, Jesus. This was an extravagant act of worship. It would be equal to writing a check totaling your annual salary and giving it away! When you look at all that Jesus has done for you, do you respond with such extravagant worship and sacrifice? Why or why not? What is holding you back? In what way can you express your worship to Jesus today?

John 17 gives us a glimpse into the character of Jesus as the Great Intercessor, praying earnestly for His disciples and for all believers. Take some time and slowly read His prayer. Is your life an answer to Jesus' prayer? In what ways do you need to move closer to Him today?

In **John 18:12**, it says that the "Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him." Ironically, Jesus was bound so you can be set free. Even though you are set free, what are the things in your life that are holding you

bound? Read **Hebrews 12:12** and notice the difference between the "sins" and the "weights" that weigh us down. It might be beneficial for you to make a list of those differences, pray over them, and submit your list back to God as an act of prayer.

John 18 is a roller coaster not only for Jesus, but also for Peter. The chapter begins with Peter valiantly standing up for Jesus, even willing to go head-to-head with the entire army of His accusers. Then, halfway through the chapter, we see Peter denying Christ 3 times! The same one, who just moments before, was passionately defending Christ is the one who is passively denying Him. Sound familiar? In what ways have you denied Christ lately? Are you ashamed of Him publicly? Take some time to self-reflect and honestly assess where your identity stands. This week, notice the times when you are tempted to deny Christ, even in the smallest ways.

Small Group Conversation Guide

Since the word "Believe" is the resounding theme in John's gospel, discuss your journey of belief.

- What hurdles did you have to cross?
- What do you find difficult to believe about the Christian faith?
- What has helped you overcome disbelief?
- What Scriptures have helped you along your belief journey?

Read **John 1:1-5** and **1:14** and discuss what this means to you: individually, as a family, in your workplace, etc.

When God created, He made something from nothing. This means that He created us. Therefore, we have no reason for pride.

We exist because He created us. How does this understanding affect your life?

The opening of John's gospel communicates to the heart of Christianity - the deity and humanity of Christ. This is where most people fall short. Either they minimize His humanity or minimize his deity. Looking at **John 1:14**, how do you balance the two?

The conversation with Jesus and Nathanael points to the fact that Jesus sees us even when we don't see Him. He is searching for us and knows us intimately even when we are not searching for Him. Read **John 1:44-51** and discuss this in your group.

John 5:37-40 is a powerful reminder that we can "know" all about the Bible and yet still

miss the message. The religious leaders knew what the Scriptures said but failed to apply it to their lives. They knew rules but neglected the relationship. Read this as a group and discuss how we can avoid making the same mistake as the religious leaders in Jesus' day. How can we practically apply the Scriptures to our everyday lives?

As believers in Christ, one of our main desires is to "do" the work of Christ. We want to be able to accomplish the mission and plan that He has for us. When we read **John 6:29**, Jesus says something that is counterintuitive to our typical understanding of "work." Discuss this with your group.

In **John 8:3-11**, the religious leaders tried to corner Jesus by publicly humiliating a woman who was caught in the very act of adultery. To her accusers' surprise, Jesus flips the script and does something amazing. What does He do? What does He tell the woman? How can we apply His words to our lives?

Read **John 9** as a group. Discuss this event as if YOU were the person who got healed. What would frustrate you? What would you tell others about what happened to you (9:25)?

- Sharing our story should be just as easy as saying, "I was blind and now I see!"
- Take some time to share your faith story with the group.

Jesus makes some audacious claims in **John 10**. Read this as a group and notice how intimately acquainted the sheep are with the shepherd. Focus on verses **27-30** and discuss how this affects our confidence in Christ.

Read **John 11:1-44**. This powerful story highlights several important themes. One theme that is often overlooked is found in verse 44 where Jesus commands those

standing around to "loose him, and let him go." Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead but He wanted others to help remove the grave clothes! He wanted other people (i.e. small group) to participate in the miracle. As the King James Version states, after four days, Lazarus "stinketh." Discuss how your group can help other members of the group remove their grave clothes (those things that are keeping them from reaching their spiritual potential).

In **John 11:40-45**, Jesus prayed aloud to God so those present could hear and believe.

- What are some benefits to us when we pray aloud?
- What are some benefits to others when we pray aloud?
- In what ways can praying aloud be uncomfortable?

Read **John 15:1-11**. In this section, Jesus calls Himself the Vine and us (believers) the branches. Using this imagery, He says that in order for the branches to bear much fruit, the Vinedresser (God) must prune them. Pruning is not an exciting part of life (see **Heb 12:7-11**); however, it is necessary for growth. Discuss times in your life when God has had to prune you. What growth came from it? What lessons did you learn? Are you thankful for it now? What would you tell others who are presently being pruned?

In **John 16:7**, Jesus says, "it is to your advantage that I go away." He says this in context of the Holy Spirit coming to fill all believers. Why did Jesus say this? How can knowing this truth change your life?

John 19:4-6 makes it clear that Pilate found no fault in Jesus. In spite of this, Pilate finally sent Jesus to be crucified. What were some probable factors that led Pilate to bend his convictions? Consider that most of us have experienced a time when we felt forced to do the wrong thing.

What types of pressures have you felt to do the wrong thing?

- peer pressure
- societal pressure
- family pressure
- fear of failure
- fear of someone in authority
- self interest

Jesus speaks intensely about the functions of the Holy Spirit. Here is a brief list from John:

- He will abide with you forever [14:16]
- He is the Spirit of Truth [14:17, 15:26]
- He dwells with you and in you [14:17]
- He is your Helper [14:26, 15:26, 16:7]
- He will teach you all things [14:26]

- He will bring to remembrance Jesus' words [14:26]
- He gives supernatural peace [14:27]
- He will testify about Jesus [15:26]
- He will convict the world [16:8]
- He will guide you into all truth [16:13]
- He will speak on behalf of the Father [16:13]

As a group, take some time to read the verses above and discuss the Holy Spirit's work in your life. What are some practical ways that the promptings of the Holy Spirit are leading you? How can knowing these truths help change the trajectory of your spiritual life? How would you teach the Holy Spirit's activity in YOUR life to someone else?

Leadership Principles from John

Focus on Your Mission

In [John 1:5](#) the Bible mentions that the world (darkness) did not comprehend Jesus. In other words, the creation did not recognize its Creator. Jesus was often misunderstood and misquoted, yet, He remained focused on His mission of redemption.

- What is the mission that God has given you as a leader?
- How can you follow Jesus' example and remain focused?

Prestigious Title

Jesus considered John the Baptist (not the author of the gospel) to be the greatest person born of women ([Mat 11:11](#)). This is a prestigious title. Read [John 3:30](#) and discover how he got that title.

- By God's standards, if a person seeks a prestigious title, does that disqualify the person for the title?
- What characteristics would you look for in a person before giving him or her a prestigious title?

Model Servant Leader

What do you do when you look around and realize that you are the most powerful person in the room? Do you bark orders? Do you leverage your power? Or, do you serve your people? In [John 13](#), Jesus is our model of what it means to be a servant leader. How do you serve as a model servant leader to those around you?

Make a Connection

Jesus Christ reached an entire city through one unnamed woman at the well who experienced His grace ([John 4](#)). As a leader, Jesus connected with her. Read the passage and notice the process He used to connect with her. He:

- Initiated contact
- Established common ground
- Listened to her
- Built a bridge by making her thirsty for something other than water
- Said enough to make her hungry for more
- Accepted her as she was
- Didn't push His agenda
- Stuck with the key issues
- Communicated directly and simply

Which of these process steps do you use as you interact with others? Are you missing some steps in the way you usually interact? How could refining your process make you better at connecting with people?

Thank God for Trials

In the midst of crisis, adversity, and tribulation, God wants to refine you as a leader. Although you are unlikely to enjoy the adversity that you are facing, know that it is for your good and God's glory ([Rom 8:28](#)).

If you are experiencing a time of extreme adversity in your leadership or undergoing an extreme season of tribulation, take heart. God loves you and He prunes those whom He loves ([John 15:1-11](#) and [Heb 12:3-11](#)).

Have you thanked God for your trials yet ([Jas 1:2](#) and [Jas 1:12](#))? Carve out some time this week to thank God for adversity. In doing so, you might gain a fresh perspective on your current situation. Of course, you'll also want

to tell Him that you can't get through it without His help.

Spiritual Feeding

Study [John 6:9-13](#) to reflect on the leadership principles you can find in the miracle of the fishes and loaves. Consider the process of getting spiritually fed and of feeding others.

action	comments
1-the men sat down	For God's Word to speak to you, you must be receptive. When feeding others, help them prepare to listen.
2-Jesus gave thanks	We should follow His example and give thanks before we partake of His Word. Teach others to do the same.
3-Jesus distributed to the disciples	Jesus involved the disciples in feeding others. As a leader, are you feeding others? Are you involving others in the feeding?
4-then the disciples distributed	This happened after people had sat down. If we are not ready to listen, the Holy Spirit will not teach us. We should first feed those who are ready to listen.
5-they ate as much as they wanted	We should feed on God's Word until we are full. The amount of time will vary. When you feed others, watch. Stop when they are full.
6-they gathered the fragments	When you are filled, gather up the fragments so you don't lose them. Journaling is one way to do this. It will give you enough to share with others. Teach others to do the same.

Servant Leader Process

In a classic example of servant leadership, Jesus modeled for us what we are to do. Jesus "...rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded

Himself...poured water...and began to wash the disciples feet..." ([John 13:4-5](#)).

- He rose: took initiative to be the servant leader. How often do you take initiative to be the servant leader?
- Laid aside His garments: put away pride, no ego. How difficult is it for you to put away your pride?
- Took a towel: was not ashamed to identify Himself as a servant. Do you ever have feelings of embarrassment when you are in a subservient role?
- Girded Himself: was fully involved in the process. Are you tempted to delegate servant leadership tasks or do you fully engage yourself?
- Poured: He was filled up (by the Holy Spirit) to be poured out. How often do you take quiet time to fill yourself spiritually so He can use you to pour out His love to others?
- Washed: He got messy. Leadership is messy. Are you willing to get messy to be a servant leader?

How to Pray for Them

In [John 17:9-23](#), Jesus prays for those He leads. For each item, in what way would a similar prayer request for those under your care be appropriate?

- Acknowledge they belong to God. (for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours)
- Ask God to keep them. (keep through Your name those whom You have given Me)
- Ask that they have oneness with God. (that they may be one as We are)
- Ask that His joy is fulfilled in them. (that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves)
- Ask Him to protect them from Satan. (that You should keep them from the evil one)
- Ask Him to set them apart by His Truth. (sanctify them by Your truth)

Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to find in each chapter.
Try these:

01. How long Jesus (i.e. "the Word") has existed	02. What miracle was the first ever that Jesus performed
03. What Jesus says happens to those who believe in Him	04. What the Samaritan woman did after meeting Jesus
05. What four things served as witnesses to who Jesus is	06. What Jesus said gives life instead of the flesh
07. What Jesus said was the "living water" inside people	08. Who Jesus said was the Pharisees' spiritual father
09. Why Jesus said the blind man was born blind	10. Why the Jews picked up stones again to kill Jesus
11. What Jesus said would never happen to believers	12. Why the believing Pharisees hid their belief in Jesus
13. What Jesus did to model how we serve one another	14. Who can come to God without going through Jesus
15. How Jesus said His "branches" (us) would bear fruit	16. How Jesus' followers will have both peace and trials
17. How Jesus said our unity is key to others believing	18. What happened when Jesus said "I am"
19. What Jesus told Pilate about governmental authority	20. Why Jesus did not allow Mary to touch Him at first
	21. What Jesus asked Peter three times (John 13:38)