



## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: LESSON 1 *"COME AND SEE"*

Imagine for a moment what it would be like to actually walk beside Jesus for 3 1/2 years -- to actually eat with Him, talk with Him, and watch Him, to witness His miracles, to hear His teachings, to see His compassion, and to experience His love. What a life-changing experience that would be. It's from that exciting and personal perspective that the Gospel of John was written. The Apostle John, one of Jesus' best friends while here on earth, was given the awesome opportunity, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to share this story of the life of Jesus Christ. He writes with great feeling and detail. The book is extremely simple, yet deeply profound and powerful. Martin Luther said, "Never in my life have I read a book written in simpler words than this and yet the words are inexpressible." John uses very simple vocabulary to explain deep spiritual truths. It is the book usually recommended for new believers to read, yet continues to speak to the hearts of those who have walked with Christ for many years. Its truths are deep and timeless.

We're excited that you have joined us this year to study the Gospel of John. This is a 23-week study designed with weekly homework for the purpose of drawing you closer to Jesus. Kent Hughes said, "Every time the serious student returns to the Gospel of John, his view of Christ will be a little bigger." Our prayer is that your view of Christ will get bigger and bigger every day!

The goal of studying any book of the Bible is to get to know the Lord in a deeper, more intimate way, and for the truth of God's Word to change us and conform us into the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). We want to be more like Him in how we think, in what we say, and in what we do. As we get to know Him, we can ask the Holy Spirit to point out those areas in our life that need to be changed (Psalm 139:23-24). We want to learn how to apply God's truth to our life and for that truth to affect our daily living (James 1:22, 2 Timothy 3:16).

To reach this goal, we need to approach our study of the Bible like a detective. This is done by observing all the facts in the passage we are studying. Every book has a purpose for being written, as well as every chapter and verse. Discovering that purpose is one of the keys to understanding what the author is saying and why he's saying it. This step is called "**Observation**," meaning that you observe all the facts. This is why Week 1 of our study always has you read the entire book, and Day 1 of each lesson has you read the entire chapter. As you are asked each week to read, you will be asked to take note of each fact you find. As you read, ask yourself questions like: **Who** said it? **Who** did they say it to? **What** happened? **Where** did it happen? **Why** did it happen? **How** did it happen? **Ask** any questions you can think of to gather information. This step may seem to be a lot of work, but you need to know what the passage is really saying before you can then decide what the passage means. Hang in there! The more you practice reading like a detective, the more it will become a habit.

The next step is "**Interpretation**." After you observe the text, you want to find out what all those facts you gathered mean. When you observe, you are asking yourself, "**What does the text say?**" As you interpret, you now ask, "**What does the text mean?**" You can go back and answer any questions you might have had during your observation. You can cross-reference, use a Bible Encyclopedia, dictionaries, and other study helps. You can do word studies, as well as look up words in an exhaustive concordance. Your goal is to find the correct meaning so you can apply *God's Word* correctly.

Finally we get to the **Application** of the text. After asking, "**What does it mean?**" you now ask, "**What does it mean to me?**" How does this apply to my life? How will this make me more like Jesus? Is this an encouragement? A rebuke? A correction? A challenge? Application requires thought, prayer, planning, and action. We need to spend time alone with the Lord, asking Him these questions. We must never neglect this step because it is the most important part of our study of Scripture. What good is knowing *God's Word* if we're not applying *God's Word*?

The **Reasons to Rejoice** Bible study is to be used as a tool for your study of the Gospel of John. Each lesson has a 5-day homework plan to help you discipline yourself each week. Take your time. Don't rush through. Meditate and ponder on each Scripture, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart personally. You don't want to miss anything the Lord has for you! You will also be given a memory

verse each week. As you spend time hiding God's Word in your heart, spend time thinking about how you can apply it to your own life.

As you study, always have a pencil ready for recording your observations. Various translations of the Bible are helpful to add color and meaning. (This study uses the New King James Version for the text.) As mentioned before, a dictionary, a Bible dictionary, and a concordance would be very helpful. Commentaries are great, but they are only to be used after completing your own study. You want the Holy Spirit to have a chance to speak to your own heart before you read someone else's comments and opinions.

The most important thing to do before you start your lesson each day is to begin with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and reveal any sin that may be there (Psalm 139:23-24). Confess those sins and ask for His forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and open up your understanding as you read His Word. We can't understand the Bible on our own. We need Him to enlighten and instruct us in all spiritual things (John 14:26).

Before we begin to study chapter by chapter, we need to get a good understanding of why the author wrote this book. We need to become familiar with the book and the author's style so we can see how each chapter ties together. We need to know the author's background, when the book was written, to whom it was written, and why it was written so we can have a better grasp on the content and how it applies to us. For this reason, our lesson this week will be a little different than the rest of the lessons. Reading the book through in its entirety once before we break it down is the best way to obtain an overview. Don't panic! God will give you the time to do it ... just ask Him. Let's look at some details first.

### **Who is the Author?**

Tradition holds that the author is the Apostle John. John was the brother of James and the son of Zebedee. Jesus renamed them the Sons of Boanerges, or the Sons of Thunder. Their family owned a fishing boat and must have been wealthy enough to hire servants (Mark 1:19-20, Luke 5:1-11, Matthew 4:21). Both brothers obeyed God's call and left their father to follow Jesus. John was one of the 12 Apostles and, along with James and Peter, was considered to be in Jesus' inner circle. He was a very close friend and companion of Jesus, referring to

himself in his writings as "the one whom Jesus loved." (John 13:23, 20:2, 21:20). He was commissioned to care for Mary, the mother of Jesus, by Jesus Himself as He hung on the cross (John 19:26-27). Jesus obviously trusted John very much. John also wrote 1, 2, and 3 John. He penned the Book of Revelation while he was exiled on the Island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9)

John has been described as uneducated and bold (Acts 4:13), intolerant (Mark 9:38), ambitious (Mark 10:35-37), trustworthy (John 19:26-27), humble (Revelation 19:10), and beloved by Jesus (John 21:20).

In the Book of Acts, John always appears with Peter, but Peter is the spokesman. John appears only once in Paul's writings and is described as one of the pillars of the church in Jerusalem, along with Peter and James (Galatians 2:9).

This is the man who will tell us the story of his friend and beloved Savior, Jesus Christ. John's Gospel is not like a movie, but more like a photo album filled with snapshots of His life. It almost sounds like a diary of special memories that best describe to the reader who Jesus really is.

### **Where and When was the Gospel of John Written?**

Most scholars believe that John wrote this Gospel from the city of Ephesus, somewhere between AD 85 and 90. After the temple was destroyed in Jerusalem, John settled in Ephesus to oversee the Christian community that was there. It is likely that the other three Gospels and the writings of Peter and Paul were already written and were circulating among the people.

### **Why did John write this Gospel?**

Did John think that Matthew, Mark, and Luke didn't do a good enough job in their description of the life of Christ? Certainly not! John writes his story from a completely different angle. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the "**Synoptic Gospels.**" Synoptic comes from the words sun and opsis, meaning "seeing together." They "view together" the same story from three slightly different perspectives. They are distinct in their styles and purpose, but similar in the way they portray the life of Christ. John, on the other hand, has a complete style and purpose of his own. You don't have to guess John's reason for writing his Gospel. He gives us the clearest statement of purpose for writing in the whole Bible. John 20:30-31 says, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book, 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." John's goal for the reader is to come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Son of God. (He uses the word "believe" 98 times in this one book!)

That's definitely the main theme of the book. All his stories are written to convince the reader of this great, profound truth.

There are many differences between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John. John omits many of the events that the others record, such as Jesus' Birth and Baptism, the Transfiguration, the institution of the Lord's Supper, the agony in Gethsemene, and others. (Although we know John had knowledge of them.) John includes many events that are distinct to his Gospel, such as the story of Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and the foot washing of the disciples in chapter 13, to name a few.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the miracles of Jesus, and call them "mighty works," and describe the feeling and emotion Jesus felt as He performed those miracles. In Mark 1:41, Jesus was "moved with compassion" when He healed the leper. He had "compassion on the widow's son" when He healed him in Luke 7:13. In his Gospel, John calls the miracles "signs" and continually brings out the reason Jesus did them, rather than the emotion He felt. He draws attention to the fact that each miracle was done "to demonstrate the glory of God" (John 2:11, 11:4, 9:3). The miracles are also followed by long discourses, explaining the spiritual truth of what Jesus was doing. William Barclay points out, "To John the miracles were not simply single events in time; they were insights into what God is always doing and what Jesus always is; they were windows into the reality of God. Jesus did not merely once feed five thousand people; that was an illustration that He is forever the real Bread of Life. Jesus did not merely once open the eyes of a blind man; He is forever the Light of the World. Jesus did not merely once raise Lazarus from the dead; He is forever and for all men the Resurrection and the Life. To John a miracle was never an isolated act; it was always a window into the reality of what Jesus always was and always is, always did and always does."

### **To Whom was This Gospel Written?**

Each Gospel was written for a different audience. **Matthew** was written to the Jews, portraying Christ as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. Christ is portrayed as the King and Ruler of the world, as well as our hearts.

**Mark** was written with a Roman audience in mind and focuses on Jesus as the Servant of All. Mark shows the activity of Jesus during His ministry as the Son of God.

**Luke** was written for a Gentile audience and gives a full account of the life of Jesus, portraying Him as the compassionate Savior with love for all people. Luke focuses on Jesus' humanity.

While some claim that **John** was writing to the Christian church, others believe his audience is universal. On one hand, John is writing to confirm believers in their faith. The church was already birthed and many heresies were already distorting the truth of who Jesus was. John wanted the church to get it straight ... **Jesus is God!** It was important that they understood the deity of Christ. He also takes great pains to explain many Jewish religious practices and Hebrew terms for his non-Jewish readers. John was also writing to the Jews, to win them to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, pointing out that Jesus was the Promised Messiah.

The Synoptic Gospels also deal with Jesus' Galilean ministry, while John covers much of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem. Chapters 1-12 concentrate on Christ's public ministry (the last 3 years of His life), and chapters 13-21 deal with His private ministry with His disciples.

You may be asking why each Gospel reports each event a little differently. Have you ever asked someone to describe a certain person to you? We know that to get a clear picture of whom that person really is, we would have to ask his wife, his mother, his children, and his friends to describe him. If we pieced all those together, we'd get a more accurate picture. Each angle given would add a different flavor to the description. In the Gospels, each author, using his own style, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, adds their insight to the description of who Jesus Christ really is and what He did while on this earth.

### **A Few More facts To Note:**

John uses much repetition in his writing. As mentioned earlier, he uses the word "believe" 98 times. The word he uses even more is "Father," 121 times; and "My Father," 35 times. Other repeated words are world, Jews, know, abide, life, light, love, and truth.

John is the only Gospel that records the seven "I AM" statements of Jesus. (I can't wait to study those!) There are no parables, publicans, scribes, lepers, or demoniacs in this Gospel. Instead we discover a treasure chest of discourses found no where else but here, in the Gospel of John. This book is sometimes referred to as "The Intimate Gospel." As we study, we'll see why. The love of God will unfold on every page. John Calvin saw this Gospel as a key which opens the door to understanding of the first three.

Well, ladies, are you ready to begin? Are you ready to see and hear what the Spirit has to say to you? Are you ready to be changed? Do you realize that God directed you to this study for a specific purpose? I pray that you will be

diligent in your study of the Word of God, and seek God's will for you each day. May you fall more and more in love with Jesus in the next 23 weeks!

### Day 1 through 5

Don't forget to begin each day with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to open up His Word to you. As you read, read with understanding. Ponder and meditate. A man named Edmund Burke said, "To read without reflecting is like eating without digesting." (Thank you, Edmund!) Don't race through it ... take your time.

1. Read the Gospel of John. As you read each chapter, make note of repeated words or phrases. Give each chapter a title to help you recall the content of that chapter. **Briefly** state the main point of each chapter and how it spoke to your heart.

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

Chapter 6:

Chapter 7:

Chapter 8:

Chapter 9:

Chapter 10:



Chapter 11:

Chapter 12:

Chapter 13:

Chapter 14:

Chapter 15:

Chapter 16:

Chapter 17:

Chapter 18:

Chapter 19:

Chapter 20:

Chapter 21:

2. Which specific chapter or chapters really ministered to your heart?  
Why?

3. Spend some time in prayer, thanking Him for all He's done for you, as seen through the *Gospel of John*.

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1