



THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

**LIFE GROUPS
LEADER GUIDE
APRIL 2021**

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	INTRO TO JOHN	

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN 1:1-5; 2:1-11; 14:6; 15:5; 20:30-31

INTRO TO JOHN

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 1:1-5; 2:1-11; 14:6; 15:5; 20:30-31. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: THOSE WHO BELIEVE JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD WILL FIND LIFE IN HIS NAME.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: JESUS IS THE ONLY MEANS BY WHICH PEOPLE MIGHT RECEIVE SALVATION.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS IS THE WORD MADE FLESH WHO CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SHINE LIGHT IN OUR DARKNESS.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 If a book were written about your life, who would you want to write it? Why?
- 2 Name two or three main themes that a book about you should express.

Words are more than a form of self-expression; they are our primary means of self-revelation. People really get to know who we are through our words. When John wrote his Gospel letter, he chose his words carefully. He used a variety of themes and techniques to express the truth about Jesus. John's Gospel takes us back to creation, details seven signs of Jesus, and recounts seven "I am" statements Jesus made—all so that we might believe He is the Son of God and have life in His name.

Where the other Gospel writers focused mostly on the facts of Jesus' life and ministry, John focused on the meaning behind those facts from the beginning. In His prologue, John connected Jesus' earthly life with His eternal status as the Word, God made flesh.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 1:1-5.

- What do we learn about Jesus from the introduction of John's Gospel letter?
- Why do you think John began his Gospel by emphasizing the eternal nature of Jesus?

By describing Jesus as “the Word,” John presented Jesus as God's self-expression to us. Through creation and then again in His incarnation, Jesus revealed what God wanted us to know about Him and who we are in Him. Before Jesus was born in a manger, before the angel told Mary she was pregnant, before any of the Old Testament prophets spoke about a Messiah, Jesus was with God, and He was God.

- Why was it important for John to point out that Jesus had a role in creation (v. 3)?
- What similarities do you see in Genesis 1 and John 1:1-5?

God the Father brought physical life through Jesus in creation (see Ps. 33:9), and He also brought spiritual life through Jesus in the incarnation. Jesus came to earth to be the One through whom God brought salvation and redemption (Heb. 10:10). In the end, Jesus will also be the One through whom creation is restored to its former glory. John points to the Son's oneness with the Father, a thread we see throughout all of Scripture. John 1:1-4 lays the foundation for the good news of the gospel: Jesus is the Son of God and in Him is eternal life.

> ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 2:1-11; 20:30-31.

- What was Jesus saying about Himself in John 2:4? Would you have expected Him to respond differently?

Notes:

Although Jesus' words in verse 4 may seem harsh to us, He was respectfully clarifying that His life and mission would be determined by His Heavenly Father, not earthly relationships. Mary had a clear picture of how Jesus could help her friends. However, in that moment of crisis, she didn't seem to have the same grasp on the reason Jesus had come into the world. As He reminded her, His work had to be done in a way that accomplished His mission.

- What else can we learn about Jesus from this miracle?
- After saying it wasn't His hour, why did Jesus perform a miracle anyway?

Jesus didn't hesitate to meet the need Mary brought to Him. But, as with most of Jesus' signs, a natural element accompanied the supernatural. Mary had to ask. The servants had to obey. The guests had to taste. This first sign John recorded leads us to see the wisdom in making Christ the Lord of our lives. We can be assured that He's concerned about us, and we can count on Him to meet our needs. Therefore, we can trust Him to guide us in a way that will glorify Him.

- Do you think it would be easier to have faith if you had walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry? Explain.

- In what way are those who believe without seeing blessed differently than those who did get to see?

Notes:

- How does John 20:31 help answer that question?

The disciples witnessed many signs and miracles that proved Jesus was the Messiah. John wrote about seven such signs in his Gospel letter (see John 4:46-54; 5:1-15; 6:4-14,16-24; 9:1-7; 11:1-45) so that we would know Jesus is God's Son and have life in His name. Those who believe in Jesus today have a more full picture of Jesus' life and ministry—and the implications for our lives now as His people—through the four Gospels and the rest of the New Testament.

> ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 14:6; 15:5.

In addition to the seven signs, John also recorded seven "I am" statements Jesus made about Himself. These verses contain two of them (see John 6:35; 8:12; 10:9,11; 11:25-26). The inclusion of these statements is also meant to help us know and believe Jesus is God's Son and have life in His name.

"I am the way" is the central claim of John 14:6. Under the Old Covenant a priest was allowed to enter the presence of God once a year. Jesus fulfilled the levitical law and sacrificial system in His person. In Him alone, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Col. 2:9). Anyone seeking the way to God has no need to look any further than Jesus.

- What does it mean to say Jesus is the truth?

- How is this different than the world's definition of truth?

Notes:

- Read John 11:25. What was Jesus claiming when He said He was the life?

Many people view truth as a set of ideas to be known and interpreted intellectually, but the Bible sees truth as something more. Jesus Christ is truth itself. Truth is not a series of facts or ideas discovered by our intellect, but rather truth is found by entering into a personal relationship with the source of all truth. Jesus is also life because He gives eternal life to His followers. Since He is truth and life, He is able to say that He is the only path to God the Father.

- From John 15:5, what do we learn about who Jesus is? About who we are?
- What does it mean to remain in Jesus? How do we do this?

The Greek word translated “remain” means “to abide” or “to dwell.” Believers have spiritual life through living in Christ, and they produce spiritual fruit by abiding in Him. We can do nothing without Christ. Only with Him living and working in us can we spiritually grow to produce fruit and make a difference in the world.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- How would you respond to someone who wants to know who Jesus is?
- In the story of your life, where does Jesus come in? What role does He play?
- How does John's account of Jesus help you share the gospel with others?

Notes:

PRAY

Thank Jesus for giving you life in His name. Invite Him to draw you closer to Him and show you who He is so that you might reveal His nature and character to others around you.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - In what way is darkness a part of your life right now? What will you do to invite the light of Jesus to pierce through this darkness?

 - Who do you know who needs to hear the truth about Jesus, the Word made flesh? How will you pursue them this week?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 1:1.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 1:1-18.

JOHN 1:1-5

1:1-2. The central focus of this verse is eternity. Like His Heavenly Father, Jesus always was and therefore existed at the beginning of time. It is interesting that John should call Jesus the Word rather than some other name to introduce his book—interesting, but not surprising since the Jews often referred to God in such terminology. The doctrine at stake here is the deity of Christ. Jesus is God, and John wanted to make that point immediately. In fact, this prologue (vv. 1-18) begins and ends with a strong statement of this doctrine. The term Word (*logos*) would have been familiar to the Greeks as well. Their understanding centered on ultimate reason or the rationale of the universe rather than the personal God revealed to Abraham and his descendants. John claimed that the God of creation, the ultimate mind of the universe, had taken on human form; He had become *incarnate*.

Notes:

1:3. Unlike the Gospel writers before him, John tells us that Jesus participated in creation and again states his case twice for emphasis. Creation is a foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. Virtually every other aspect of theology rests upon our understanding of God as the origin of all life and of the role of Jesus Christ, the Word, in creation. John could hardly say it more clearly: without Him nothing was made that has been made. Only God who created all things can redeem them. Creation is the foundation stone of the gospel. Christ could not have been created, for He created all things.

1:4-5. Here we find the first appearance of our key word—life. The revelation of the Lamb was also the revelation of life. Jesus Christ the Creator provides physical life; Jesus Christ the Redeemer provides spiritual life; and Jesus Christ the Savior provides eternal life. In verse 4 John also introduced another key word—light. The life becomes the light of men. Notice these positive terms. What a wonderful contrast to death and darkness. In the Word, God's person and power were revealed to humanity. Here again we see a reference to creation since, in the Genesis account, light was the first evidence of God's creative work. God is always the source of light and life. Christ the Son, the Creator, provides life and light to humanity.

JOHN 2:1-11

2:1-5. John's Gospel says Jesus performed His first miracle at the wedding in Cana. According to Bible scholars, a few towns in the Galilean area at that time might have been this Cana. It was probably the village fewer than 10 miles from Nazareth, Jesus' home town. Like the Nazarenes, the people of Cana weren't wealthy. Most of the residents probably were farmers or craftsmen.

Notes:

Hospitality was very important to people in Jesus' time, and it brought tremendous pride to a host family. Not being able to provide for their guests would be shameful.

Of course, Mary didn't have any way of helping her friends, so she asked Jesus. No one else at the wedding feast knew Jesus like His mother. The years after Jesus' birth had given her plenty of time to think about everything that had happened when He was born.

Mary knew Jesus could help her friends, but she didn't seem to understand why Jesus had come into the world. As He reminded her, His work had to be done in a way that accomplished His mission. Therefore, He would only perform a miracle if it showed He was the Messiah.

When He talked about His hour, Jesus was thinking about the time of His death and resurrection. For Jesus, His hour meant dying on the cross and rising again. In everything that Jesus said and did throughout His ministry, He never forgot that He would face the cross. That meant He would provide wine at a wedding only if it would help Him complete His mission..

2:6-10. John pointed out that the water pots had been placed there for the purpose of ceremonial purification practices. For instance, one of the most common purification ceremonies using water was hand washing (Mark 7:3). Jewish people in that day considered water stored in clay pots as unclean and not good for ceremonial use (Lev. 11:33).

After the servants filled the pots with water, Jesus performed a miracle. He turned the water into wine. As the banquet continued, the guests would usually be served older wine that didn't taste as good. But the groom and his family had done something special by waiting to serve the best wine. As a result of the happy surprise, the guests would enjoy the taste of the fresh wine. At the same time, the poor host family would enjoy the honor of having provided it for guests. Because of what Jesus did for Mary, we know that He is interested in our concerns and struggles. He could have ignored Mary's request for help if He thought it wasn't important, but that's not what happened at all. He addressed the need she brought to Him, which showed His concern for a family that might be embarrassed. Notice that Jesus took decisive action to fix the problem. Jesus is concerned about what concerns us. No issue or need in our lives is too small for Him.

Notes:

Many Bible scholars agree that Jesus provided a symbol for the disciples when He turned the water into wine. The miracle symbolized the difference between the lifeless religion of the Jews and a growing relationship with Jesus. The banquet with no more wine represented the spiritual emptiness of the people of Israel during that time. By contrast, the wine Jesus provided symbolized the fresh joy and blessing that came with knowing and following Him. While the Old Testament provided glimpses of God to His people, Jesus Christ alone provided the perfect picture of Him. Devotion to Christ would turn someone in a dead religion into a person who can experience new life that's full of true joy and lasting fulfillment.

2:11. John referred to Jesus' first miracle as a sign. At the wedding celebration, He did more than merely turn water into wine. Like a sign on a road that pointed a traveler toward a city, Jesus' miracle pointed to the fact that He was God's Son—the Messiah that the people of Israel had been waiting for. Other signs would be given along the way to show that God had kept His promise and sent His Son who would provide the way of salvation.

Jesus revealed God's presence in Himself when He turned the water into wine. At that point, people could see that He was a man, but He was also God. Obviously, the miracle had made quite an impact on Jesus' disciples. They could see that the miracle signaled His identity as God's Son and displayed His glory as the Messiah. What they saw had a significant effect on them. John said that it caused them to believe in Him even more. Previously they had placed their trust in Him as the Messiah and devoted themselves to following Him. However, their faith in Him still needed to grow. The miracle they beheld helped strengthen their faith in Him as God's Son.

Notes:**JOHN 14:6**

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (see note at 6:35,48), and no one comes to the Father except through Him. Jesus alone is able to provide access to God because He alone paid the penalty for our sins (Isa 53:5; Heb 1:3). He is the truth (Jn 1:14,17; 5:33; 18:37; cp. 8:40,45-46), and all contrary claims are false. He alone is the life (1:4), having life in Himself (5:26). He is thus able to confer eternal life on all those who believe in Him (3:16). Jesus is truth and life, and He is the one and only way of salvation.

JOHN 15:5

Galatians 5:24-26 shows how this teaching of John 15 links closely to what Jesus has already said in John 14 about the Holy Spirit: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other" (Gal. 5:24-26). In my view, John 15 is not a passage on evangelism and the fruit does not describe new believers. This passage probably deals with discipleship and fruit describes godly behavior.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	APRIL 11	21

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

JOHN 1:1-18

APRIL 11, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 1:1-18. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS, THE WORD, IS GOD. HE EXISTED IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD, AND HE WAS ACTIVE IN CREATION.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: IN COMING TO EARTH, JESUS BROUGHT THE HOPE OF SALVATION AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR US "TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD" BY BELIEVING IN HIM.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: WHILE REMAINING COMPLETELY GOD, JESUS BECAME COMPLETELY MAN AND LIVED LIKE US. HIS MINISTRY ON EARTH BEGAN AT BIRTH AND ENDED IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION. IT'S ONLY THROUGH JESUS THAT WE RECEIVE FORGIVENESS AND ETERNAL LIFE.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 What is the weirdest Bible story or command you've ever heard?

- 2 If you were given the chance to ask God to explain one thing about the Bible, what would it be and why?

Words are more than a form of self-expression; they are our primary means of self-revelation. People really get to know who we are through our words. Jesus was called the Word of God in John 1, meaning He is God's revelation of Himself to us. When the Word became flesh, Jesus brought the hope of salvation and the opportunity for us to become children of God by believing in Him.

While the basic message of the gospel is simple and clear, there are many elements of the Christian faith that are not easy to understand. One of those is how Jesus could be both God and man at the same time, and why God's love for us required Jesus to be just that. Today's study of John 1:1-18 teaches that Jesus was both God and man and helps us understand how important this truth is to the gospel we share with others. Love caused God to act by sending Jesus, love requires that we act too.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

Unlike the other Gospel writers, John didn't begin with a genealogy or a background overview. He opened his book by describing Jesus the Messiah, or Chosen One. John made it clear from verse 1 that Jesus is God, and his entire Gospel would be geared toward proving that fact.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:1-4.

- Why do you think John began his Gospel by talking about how Jesus existed from eternity past?

Many people argue that Jesus was a prophet who did good works but wasn't the Son of God. How do John's words argue against that idea?

- What does it mean that Jesus is "the Word"?

By describing Jesus as "the Word," John presented Jesus as God's expression of Himself to us. Through creation and then again in coming to earth, Jesus revealed what God wanted us to know about Him and about who we are in Him. Before Jesus was born in a manger, before the angel told Mary she was pregnant, and before any of the Old Testament prophets spoke about a Messiah, Jesus was with God, and He was God.

- Why was it important for John to point out that Jesus had a role in creation (v. 3)?
- Read Genesis 1. What words or phrases are the same or similar in Genesis 1 and John 1:1-5?

In the same way that God the Father brought physical life through Jesus in creation (Ps. 33:9), He also brought spiritual life through Jesus. Jesus came to earth to bring salvation to mankind. John points to the Son's unity with the Father that we see throughout all of Scripture. John 1:1-4 sets the stage for the good news of the gospel: Jesus is the Son of God, and in Him is eternal life.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:10-11,14-15.

- Some people claim that Jesus was not actually a real historical person. If Jesus was completely human, what facts about Him must be true? (Encourage such answers as "He must have a human body, emotions," etc.).

- Why is it necessary for people to understand Jesus is fully human?

A major theme in John's Gospel is the rejection Jesus encountered, including from many Jews who didn't recognize Him as the Messiah. Even with the countless signs, fulfilled prophecies, and Jesus' own statements about Himself, they did not accept Jesus as God's Son. Although they were a religious people, they did not understand who Jesus was because they expected something totally different.

- God wasn't trying to disguise Jesus from anyone. Why, then, did Jesus seem so different from what everyone expected?

- What kind of savior do you think the Jewish people expected?

- What kind of savior are the people around you looking for?

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:12-13,16-18.

Jesus came to restore the whole world back to a right relationship with God. Our physical bloodlines don't decide where we will spend eternity; only a personal relationship with God through Jesus, the Messiah, can make that happen. Because He loves us, God made a way for us.

- Why do you think the Jewish people had a hard time accepting that Jesus came to save the whole world and not just the Jews?

To think that God wanted to save the entire world was a crazy idea to the Jewish people. They grew up believing the Messiah would save only the Jews. No wonder so many Jews thought Jesus was preaching false words.

- How has your family or cultural background shaped your spiritual journey?
- How has family or cultural background shaped the spiritual journey of a non-Christian you know?

In verses 16-17, John reminded his readers that Christ is superior to the Old Testament law. The Mosaic law, a law we could never live up to, wasn't intended to bring salvation but to highlight our need for a Savior. Christ lived in perfect obedience to the law and fulfilled it so we don't have to. As a result, we can rest in God's abundant and ongoing "grace in place of grace" (v. 16).

- What did Jesus' death and resurrection accomplish for us?

Notes:

- If you're a Christ-follower, how have you experienced the "grace in place of grace" John talked about in verse 16?

When Jesus moved into our neighborhood, He came bearing the full glory of God—the same glory that sent fire from heaven and filled the temple with a bright cloud (2 Chron. 7:1-3; 5:14). Through Christ, the very glory of God became accessible to everyone, and we're all invited into His presence. But we can't miss the fact that when Jesus "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (v. 14). He literally became human, meaning He lived like us. He was susceptible to sickness, death, and a full range of emotions. Jesus is both God and man, and while it may be challenging for us to grasp this, we can't minimize either His humanity or divinity.

God did more than shout down from heaven, "I love you!" to the people on earth. He demonstrated His love by sending Jesus to die on the cross. That's the nature of love—it's more than mere emotion or sentiment. True love is intentional and action-oriented. When we begin to grasp the depth of Jesus' love for us, we will find ourselves freed to love each other in that same sacrificial and intentional kind of way.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- Why is it dangerous to think of Jesus as only God and not also fully human? What is the danger of seeing Him as a man, but not God?
- What did love require God to do when He saw that humanity was lost and selfish?
- What does love require us to do when we see that same qualities in our families, coworkers, and neighbors?

PRAY

To close today's group time, thank God for sending His love and grace to us through His Son. End the time praising God for the sacrifice He made on our behalf. Challenge your group members to be motivated by the gospel in the coming weeks.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How has thinking about God's love shown through Jesus changed your focus this week?

 - What steps have you taken to share the truth of the gospel with someone in need this week?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 1:14.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 1:19-50.

JOHN 1:1-18

1:1–18. John’s prologue presents Jesus as the eternal, preexistent Word-become-flesh (vv. 1, 14) and as the one-of-a-kind Son of the Father who is himself God (vv. 1, 18). Jesus brought God’s plan of salvation to a culmination. Previous to Jesus this plan included God giving the law through Moses (v. 17), his dwelling among his people in the tabernacle (v. 14), and the sending of John the Baptist (vv. 6–8, 15). The prologue introduces several themes that are emphasized later in the Gospel, including Jesus as life, light, and truth, believers as God’s children, and the world’s rejection of Jesus.

Notes:

1:1. In the beginning was the Word echoes Gn 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” John located Jesus’s existence in eternity past with God. The Word was God: Not only did Jesus exist before creation, he is also the same God who created the heavens and the earth. “The Word” (Gk Logos) conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech (Ps 19:1–4). God’s Word is effective. He speaks, and things come into being (Gn 1:3, 9; Is 55:11–12).

1:2–3. Everything that exists owes its existence to Jesus.

1:4–5. The references to life ... light, and darkness continue to draw on Genesis themes (cp. Gn 1:3–5, 14–18, 20–31; 2:7; 3:20). Light symbolism is also found in later OT messianic passages (Is 9:2; 42:6–7; 49:6; 60:1–5; Mal 4:2; cp. Lk 1:78–79).

1:6. Unlike Jesus, John the Baptist was merely a man, but like Jesus he had a particular mission to perform.

1:9. As the rest of John’s Gospel makes clear, all did not in fact receive the light, though the light was available to all.

1:10–11. His own people did not receive him refers to the Jewish people, the recipients of God’s covenants, the law, and promises of a Messiah (Rm 9:4). Messiah’s rejection by the Jews despite convincing proofs of his messiahship

(esp. the “signs”) is a major subject in the first half of John’s Gospel (cp. 12:37).

1:12–13. Reference to children of God builds on the OT characterization of Israel as God’s children (Dt 14:1; cp. Ex 4:22). Born, not of natural descent ... but of God makes clear that true children of God come into being through faith in Messiah, not physical birth or ethnic descent (8:41–47; cp. 3:16). This opens the way for Gentiles to become God’s children (11:51–52; cp. 10:16).

Notes:

1:14. The Word continues the theme of 1:1. Became flesh does not mean the Word stopped being God; rather, the Word was made flesh. Dwelt among us literally means “pitched his tent” (Gk skenoō), an allusion to God’s dwelling among the Israelites in the tabernacle (Ex 25:8–9; 33:7). In the past God demonstrated his presence to his people in the tabernacle and the temple. Now God has taken up residence among his people in the Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17). The references to God’s glory hark back to OT passages that describe the manifestation of God’s presence and glory in theophanies (appearances of God), the tabernacle, or the temple (Ex 33:22; Nm 14:10; Dt 5:22). The Greek word monogenēs underlying one and only Son from the Father means “only child” (Jdg 11:34; Jr 6:26; Am 8:10; Zch 12:10). “Only” may mean “one of a kind,” as in the case of Isaac, who is called Abraham’s “one of a kind” son in Gn 22:2, 12, 16 (in contrast to Ishmael, cp. Heb 11:17). In the OT, Israel and the Son of David are called God’s “firstborn” son (see Ps 89:27). The reference to God’s “giving” of his “one and only Son” in Jn 3:16, 18 may allude to Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Gn 22).

Full of grace and truth recalls “faithful love (Hb chesed) and truth (Hb emet)” in Ex 34:6 (cp. Ex 33:18–19), where the expression refers to God’s covenant faithfulness to his people Israel. According to John, God’s covenant faithfulness found ultimate expression in his sending of his “one and only Son,” Jesus.

1:15. John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus (Lk 1:24, 26), and he started his ministry earlier than Jesus (Lk 3:1–20). Usually, priority in time (such as being the firstborn) implied preeminence, but Jesus’s preexistence overrode John’s temporal precedence.

Notes:

1:16. This verse resumes the thought of 1:14. We refers to the same group as “we” and “us” in v. 14, that is, the apostolic circle or the whole believing community.

1:17. The contrast between the law and grace and truth is not that the law was bad and Jesus was good; rather, both the giving of the law and the coming of Jesus Christ mark stages in God’s reaching out to humanity. Jesus, however, marks the final, definitive revelation of God’s grace and truth. He is superior to Abraham (8:53), Jacob (4:12), and Moses (5:46–47; cp. 9:28).

1:18. No one has ever seen God—not even Moses (Ex 33:18–23). God is spirit (4:24), and humans are sinful, preferring darkness to light (3:19). Thus humans are unable to see God in his fullness. But Jesus Christ, the one and only Son who is himself God (1:1), has revealed God the Father in a way that Moses and the law (1:17) never could. As Jesus says later in John’s Gospel, “The one who has seen me has seen the Father” (14:9).

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	APRIL 18	21

FOLLOWING THE LAMB

JOHN 1:19-50

APRIL 18, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 1:19-50. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS CALLED HIS FIRST DISCIPLES, IGNITING THE FIRE OF DISCIPLESHIP THAT WILL CONTINUE TO BURN INTO ETERNITY.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE ARE CALLED TO FOLLOW JESUS IN THE SAME WAY HE CALLED THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: AS WE EXPERIENCE THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF CHRIST IN OUR LIVES, WE ARE CALLED TO INVITE OTHERS TO "COME AND SEE," SO THAT THEY MIGHT EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL AS WELL.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Have you had a mentor you “followed around” when you first became a young adult, or at another time in life?
- 2 If this person had asked you what you wanted, what would you have said?

Many people look for mentors to “show them the ropes.” The disciples had the greatest teacher and mentor in history: Jesus. After writing on Jesus’ identity as the eternal Word of God, John switched to a historical account of Jesus’ selection of His first disciples. The interesting thing here is that Jesus did not directly recruit some of them, as seems to be the case most often in the Gospels (Matt. 9:9; Mark 1:16–17,19–20), but the new disciples went out and recruited other disciples. In these stories, we find some of our best examples of evangelism—telling someone else what we have experienced in Jesus Christ. Andrew brought his brother Peter, while Philip went out and recruited his friend Nathanael.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:19-34.

- How does our culture determine who is important or worthy of attention?

John moved out into the middle of the desert. He lived as a hermit, wore clothes made out of camel hair, and ate locusts (Matt. 3:4). He made a point to insult pretty much everyone of importance. For example, he called the religious Pharisees a brood of snakes (Matt. 3:7). He publicly rebuked the ruler of the region and later got himself thrown in prison and ultimately beheaded (Matt. 14:3-10). Some might view John the Baptist as a man of wasted potential. But John's life can be summed up in John 1:29, when he said, "Look, the Lamb of God."

Notes:

- How did John point others to Jesus instead of pointing to himself?
- What can we learn about following Jesus from John's words and actions?

There was a time when we all might have known facts and stories about Jesus but not have believed in His true identity and confessed Him as Lord. At some point, though, we had a personal encounter with Jesus and saw Him as He really is. For John, that moment came during Jesus' baptism. John suddenly realized that his relative, whom he thought he knew for so long, was more than just a relative. He is the Messiah, the one and only Son of God.

- What are some experiences that have shaped your understanding of Jesus?
- How has encountering Jesus transformed your life?
- What are some things that help you remember your encounter with Christ and remain focused on Him?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:35-42.

- In what ways was Jesus' question in verse 38 so unexpected and challenging?
- What are most people looking for in life today? Why do you believe that?

Notes:

The calling of the first disciples is packed with some great moments! John the Baptist had disciples who followed him, and when he made a comment about Jesus being “the Lamb of God,” two of his disciples slipped away and began following Jesus from a distance. Jesus' question of them in verse 38 was on point. He knew the two men were searching for something in life. His question challenged them to think about what really mattered. This very question can still be asked of people today: “What are you looking for?”

The two followers asked Jesus a question, but Jesus chose not to answer it directly. (See the last part of verse 38). This probably caused the men to be even more curious about Jesus. They committed to spend the day with Him and learn more about Him.

After a time, one of the two followers, Andrew, became convinced that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. He found his brother, Peter, and brought him to meet Jesus. Immediately Jesus spoke to Peter and called him by name. Then He gave him a new name.

- Why is it significant that Peter got a new name?
How does one's name influence his or her identity?
- When has God “called you by name” and “given you a new name”?

It is important to note that Jesus called Peter by his name. Jesus knows each of us by name, and Scripture says that He even knows the number of hairs on our head. (See Luke 12:7.) When Jesus calls us to be His disciples, He does so knowing everything about us—the good and the bad. Nothing is hidden from Him. In spite of our shortcomings, Jesus still calls us to “come ... follow.” Jesus’ giving Peter a new name signifies Peter’s new identity—he became a follower, a disciple of Jesus.

Notes:

- Can you name any other people in Scripture whom God gave new names?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 1:43-51.

- What was the last thing you discovered that was so good, you could hardly wait to tell someone?
- When you have good news to share, who is the first person you want to tell?

The calling of the first disciples continued the very next day. When Jesus saw Philip, He stopped and told him to “Follow Me!” Philip did what Andrew had done the day before – he went to someone he cared for, Nathanael, and challenged him to come and meet with Jesus. Philip believed Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah.

A wonderful pattern emerges in these verses. Jesus calls people to “Follow me,” and those people in turn call others to “come and see,” to follow Jesus as well. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you can ask friends and family to “come and see” Jesus, too. That was the pattern among Jesus’ first disciples. They were called. They called others.

- When you consider that Jesus knows everything about you, how does that make you feel? (i.e. Proud – I am living my life to please Him; Afraid – I worry about being punished for wrongdoing; Thankful – I am grateful He knows me personally; Amazed – With the billions of people on the planet, how can He know me?)

Notes:

Jesus proved He was the Messiah by revealing knowledge of Nathanael's activities just before their meeting—Jesus saw him sitting under a fig tree, perhaps taking a break from his work or enjoying the shade on a hot day. Nathanael quickly acknowledged Jesus' deity (v. 49). Jesus' calling of the first disciples was done in a personal way. Jesus singled out people He called to be His disciples, and He called some of them by name. He knew things about them that only God could know. He called these men to a life of discipleship, and He is doing the same thing today.

Jesus knows you. He knows us all. And He calls us to follow Him, making Him the Lord (boss) of our lives. Jesus loves you just as you are, with all of your imperfections and weaknesses. He knows your potential, and He has great things planned for your life. What Jesus told Nathanael could be said to you and I today: "You will see greater things than that." God has a wonderful plan for your life, and it begins with you saying "yes" to the call to follow Him as a disciple.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- Just as the twelve disciples had to learn what it meant to follow Jesus, so do we. What have you been learning recently about what it means to be Jesus' disciple?
- As a group, how are we doing at following Jesus? How can we do better, so that people will recognize our commitment to be His disciples and want to "come and see"?
- Who can you reach out to, like Andrew and Philip did, and invite to this group to learn about Jesus?

PRAY

Thank God for His personal and distinct call on your life to follow Jesus. Ask Him to help you continue learning who He is and what it requires for you to be His disciple. Ask Him for opportunities this week to invite other people to "come and see."

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - What changes will you make to help you be more intentional about longing for, looking for, and living for opportunities to demonstrate the power of the gospel?
 - What are the main challenges or barriers that keep us from living a life that demonstrates the love and grace of Jesus? What opportunities are presented to us daily to do so?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 1:29.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 2:1-25.

JOHN 1:19-51

1:19–22. Picture the rugged prophet John the Baptist storming up and down the desert, telling people the Messiah is coming. He wore animal skins and ate locusts and wild honey, hardly a refined rabbi with the proper credentials. So formal religious investigation gets under way. The phrase “the Jews” appears nearly seventy times in this Gospel. Sometimes it is used favorably, but more often it expresses hostility. The priests represented the Sanhedrin and the Levites guarded the correctness of temple worship. All the delegates had a simple question for John the Baptist: “Who are you?” Lest anyone confuse the messenger with the Messiah, John quickly told them, I am not the Christ. “Christ” (christos) is simply the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. Both words mean “anointed.”

Notes:

Then they give him two other suggestions to deny, Elijah and the Prophet. No portraits of Elijah hung in first-century museums, but John may have reminded his contemporaries of the verbal descriptions in 1 Kings. More than likely, however, this dialogue referred to Malachi 4:5–6: “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.”

The Prophet probably referred to Moses’ promise in Deuteronomy 18:15: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.”

1:23. We can hardly imagine the shock the Jerusalem delegation must have felt upon hearing this rugged mountain man quote Isaiah 40:3 to describe himself. Think back to Isaiah’s warnings about the future rise of Babylon with the sharp break in the narrative which begins at chapter 40 to describe the future restoration of Israel. Here is the context for John’s answer:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken (Isa. 40:1–5).

Notes:

So John was Elijah after all (Matt. 11:14; 17:10–13). He fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi as the forerunner who would proclaim the coming of the king.

1:24–28. Enter the Pharisees, often depicted in the New Testament as the bad guys in the black hats (though there were notable exceptions like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea). They were not satisfied with John's answers; they wanted a picture I.D.—particularly because John was not just preaching. He was also baptizing people without proper credentials.

John's response rings as one of the great statements of history which our text will amplify in verses 31–34. Water baptism for John's disciples was a ritual act of cleansing demonstrating repentance and anticipation of the Messiah. But already in their very midst he had come. John considered himself unworthy to do the chores of the lowest household slave—loosen Jesus' sandals.

John the Gospel writer was not as concerned with geography as Luke. But he let his readers know where it all began. We should not confuse this Bethany with the hometown of Mary and Martha (11:1) just outside Jerusalem. John designated it as the Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, east of the river.

The answers of John the Baptist offer us three important lessons as Christians: (1) We are not the focus of the

witness; (2) we are not the light; and (3) we proclaim belief in Jesus.

1:29. What a revelation and proclamation of the gospel! Imagine the scene as Jesus approached the area of Bethany and John spotted him in the distance. We have come to the second day of John's narrative, and we will see yet one to come in this first chapter. The first biblical mention of the Lamb appears in Genesis 22 when Abraham went to the altar to offer his son Isaac. Leviticus 14 talks about lambs as a guilt offering. John came back to it in Revelation as a triumphal title for the conquering Lord.

Notes:

The full expression Lamb of God is found only here and in John 1:36. But the emphasis on substitutionary atonement and the universal offering of salvation and forgiveness of sin form the heart and core of the gospel. As we think about the theme of substitutionary atonement, our minds again rush back to the prophet Isaiah:

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed (Isa. 53:1-5).

1:30-31. John 1:30 is a restatement of John 1:15, emphasizing again John the Baptist's claim of the priority of Christ. John admitted that he did not know his own cousin was the Messiah until Jesus' baptism in the desert.

1:32-34. The baptism of Jesus (see also Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22) took place before this announcement of John 1. The purpose of his baptism,

according to Jesus himself, was to fulfill all righteousness—to demonstrate his consecration to the heavenly Father and approval by him. God had obviously given John a direct revelation, telling him that when he saw the dove come down during the baptism he would know the Son of God.

Notes:

John the Gospel writer continues chapter 1 in high drama. The first people who saw Jesus as the Messiah observed him not in monarchical splendor, but as a Lamb. John the Baptist tells us this Lamb came to take away the sin of the world, that he first revealed himself to Israel, and that he is the Son of God. How easy it would have been to speak in lofty theological language of Old Testament themes. But John wanted no misunderstanding among his hearers, either disciples or religious leaders, so he affirmed what he knew: I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.

1:35–39. John’s Gospel does not say much about the calling of Jesus’ disciples, but the remainder of chapter 1 introduces several of them. The spotlight falls on two of John’s followers, quite possibly one of them the author of these words. Upon hearing their leader announce the second time that Jesus was God’s Lamb, they both left John and followed Jesus, only to have their motives challenged. Rabbi was a term of great respect, acknowledging Jesus as a master teacher.

The text seems to suggest that these two disciples spent the evening with the Lord (the tenth hour would have been 4 p.m.)—an evening which led to their affirmation that he was indeed the Messiah. The evening also led to witness, since Andrew began his ministry with family evangelism by bringing his brother to Jesus.

1:40–42. Jesus, these disciples would learn, sometimes issued shocking statements. The first thing he did with Peter was to change his name. Cephas, the Aramaic form, became Peter, the Greek version. Both names mean “rock.” Andrew was the first disciple to follow Jesus, but he is never mentioned first in any list of the disciples in the

New Testament. Peter, on the other hand, rose to dominance in the Jerusalem church. He was hardly a rock when Jesus called him, but he became that after Pentecost.

Notes:

1:43–49. Philip went off to find another friend, telling Nathanael about their discovery, and mentioning Nazareth in his announcement. Nathanael asked a question which, though probably intended quite innocently at the time, has become a cliché among Bible students: Can anything good come from there?

Philip wasted no time arguing the point. He took Nathanael (also called Bartholomew in the New Testament) directly to Jesus. Again Jesus stunned a future disciple with his first words. He affirmed Nathanael as a genuine student of the Torah—a righteous Jew taught to live in accordance with all the light he had.

Upon learning about the Lord’s omniscience—having known his exact location even before Philip found him—Nathanael, like John the Baptist, declared Jesus the Son of God and added, “You are the King of Israel.” The phrase under the fig tree was used in rabbinical literature to describe meditation on the law. Nathanael had apparently been reading Genesis 28. Jesus contrasted Jacob’s guile with Nathanael’s integrity.

1:50–51. The last two verses of chapter 1 seem difficult to understand. Had Nathanael been reading about Jacob’s dream under the fig tree? Is this why Jesus referred to the open heavens? Should we view this as a future prophecy? Tenney suggests that “he himself was to be the new medium of revelation, a surer link between heaven and earth than the ladder which for the errant Jacob meant a way to God” (p. 82). Whatever the interpretation, Jesus indicated that Nathanael’s old covenant faith must now center in him, the focus of the new covenant. Jesus referred to himself as the Son of Man, a term he used more than eighty times. This title emphasized his humanity and suffering as well as the perfection of his human nature.

John 1 describes five men who met the Lord and the Lamb. All different. All believers. All models. What great lessons they teach us. We learn that witnessing is everybody's responsibility. We also learn that witnessing begins at home, either in one's own family or hometown, not necessarily by going to another country. A third lesson is that witnessing promotes the Lord, not ourselves or some personal agenda. And finally, these early disciples show us that witnessing is both verbal and specific.

Notes:

During one of my pastorates, I conducted a Thursday evening visitation program, after which those of us who went out sharing the gospel would come back and describe our experiences. On one occasion I asked the group, "What did you pray as you left the building and started out to knock on doors?" One young man responded in refreshing candor, "I prayed nobody would be at home."

How often we feel that way. Witnessing sometimes seems so difficult, such an imposition on people who do not want to hear what we have to say. Yet we must learn to start at home and, without wasting words, direct people to Jesus. Like John the Baptist, we must say to our modern world, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	APRIL 25	21

WATER TO WINE

JOHN 2:1-25

APRIL 25, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 2:1-25. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS' SIGNS AND WONDERS LEAD US TO RESPOND WITH AWE, JOY, AND FAITH.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE SHOULD NOT PRIMARILY SEEK SIGNS AND WONDERS BUT INSTEAD MUST SEEK JESUS.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS' MIRACLES ARE NOT MEANT TO STAND ON THEIR OWN BUT TO POINT US TO HIS IDENTITY AS GOD.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 What's the most memorable magic trick you've ever seen?
- 2 What are miracles? How are miracles different than magic?

Part of the reason Jesus initially gained popularity was His miraculous displays of power. Regardless of what people thought of Jesus' identity, they were interested in Him because He was a miracle-worker. But Jesus' miracles were not meant to entertain or impress—rather, they reveal something about Him.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:1-5.

- Imagine you are at a wedding and you find out the food's run out before you can enjoy dinner. How would you react?
- Why might running out of wine at a wedding be a problem?

In Jesus' culture, weddings were a time of massive celebration and generosity. Running out of wine during a wedding would have been a major embarrassment to the bride and groom, as well as their families.

- Why do you think Mary shared the problem with Jesus? What does this show about the nature of their relationship at this time?

Notes:

- What's your reaction to Jesus calling Mary "woman"? What do you think He meant by this?

When Jesus called Mary "Woman," it sounds rude to our ears, but it's actually a title of respect. It would be like calling a woman today "ma'am" or "madam." But even with this sign of respect, Jesus offered a very mild rebuke, saying, "My hour has not yet come" (v. 4).

- Read John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1. Based on these verses, what was Jesus talking about when He said "my hour"?

Throughout the Book of John, the phrase "my hour" was meant to point forward to the events of Jesus' death and resurrection—the time of His victory over sin and death.

- Why would Jesus be reluctant to perform a miracle? Have you ever been frustrated at His timing? Has there been a time when you asked Him to intervene in a situation in your life, and He responded that it wasn't the right time?

Jesus was reluctant to perform the miracle because He knew the people's misconceptions about the Messiah. They were expecting a military leader, a mighty warrior to overthrow the Romans and bring power and prosperity to Israel once again. Instead, Jesus came as a humble servant to die on the cross to pay for the sins of His people.

- What do you have to believe about the nature and character of Jesus in order to accept His timing even when it's not convenient for you?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:6-11.

- Read Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-14; Jeremiah 31:12. According to these passages, what is wine a symbol of?

Notes:

- Why is it significant that Jesus made a better kind of wine?

Jesus was brought six jars that were used for purification rites, and from the water poured into them, He made wine. And He didn't just make good wine, but the best wine!

- What does this miracle tell us about Jesus?
- In what way is Jesus' whole ministry about making something better than what people previously had?

In Jesus' first sign, He revealed Himself as the Giver of great blessings. He gave the best wine, and in doing so, He multiplied exponentially the joy of the wedding feast. But Jesus isn't content to give us temporal blessings. He didn't come to give us abundant life only in the here and now. He came so we can enjoy eternal joy and blessing with Him as our Bridegroom and the church as His bride! People are no longer bound to the old wine of the law; there is the new wine of Jesus.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:12-22.

When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, the Passover was near. Because of this, people would need to make sacrifices. The court of the Gentiles, the outer part of the temple where all people were welcomed, was filled with people selling the

animals that would have been required for Passover sacrifices. Jesus became angry because these sales were occurring “in the temple courts” (v. 14).

Notes:

- Read Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11, which Jesus referenced in Matthew’s account of the same event (Matt. 21:12-13). How had the money changers taken something sacred and made it common?
- Since we know Jesus never sinned, we know that His anger was righteous. Read Ephesians 4:26. When is it good and right to be angry?

The temple was where the presence of the Lord dwelled among His people. While it was the center of Jewish worship, it was not only for the Jews. The temple was a to be the house of prayer for all people. God has always had a global purpose to include people of all nations in His distinct people. The commerce angered Jesus because the money changers were treating the temple flippantly and not reverently. He was right to be angry, and His anger motivated Him to action—turning over tables and driving money changers out. The Bible makes a distinction between righteous and unrighteous anger, and as we grow in the Holy Spirit, we learn to tell the difference between the two.

- Compare and contrast the disciples’ response to Jesus and the Jews in the temple? How did the Jews misunderstand and misinterpret Jesus? What did they not understand about the temple?

The temple was holy because of the presence of God, not because of a location or place (John 4:21-24). The Jews did not connect the Messianic prophecies as Jesus’ disciples did. Jesus was the presence of God in bodily form in the temple. It was His temple, and He was able to do as He pleased. Today, the temple of God is in believers of Jesus because the presence

of God dwells in us through His Spirit. The temple is where we are. For this reason, we cannot take our actions lightly. We must be governed by what God finds acceptable, rather than what is acceptable in our culture.

Notes:

- How should being a temple of the Holy Spirit change the way that we live? What is one concrete way the Holy Spirit has changed you?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:23-25.

- Look back at verse 18, and then verse 23. What causes the “many” to follow Jesus? Why was this not enough for true faith (v. 24)? How was their faith misplaced?
- Can you identify any part of yourself or people you know in the variety of response to Jesus in John 2?
- How did the common understanding of faith in the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry keep them from seeing who He really was? What keeps people today from seeing Jesus for who He is?

John frequently used the word “sign” to describe Jesus’ miracles. Many people followed Jesus because of His power, but not because of His identity. John condemned such belief because it was not centered on the person of Christ. God is not fooled or convinced by insincere worship which the first century cultural climate—and our own—made room for. People did not want to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord for the same reasons people reject Him today: it’s inconvenient and brushes up against our preferred understanding. However, we must always pursue truth where it is found—in Jesus Himself.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- Read John 2:11 again. How does Jesus want us to go beyond the miracles? What does He want us to see about Him?

- How have you seen God's glory in a way that has led you to trust Jesus more deeply than you did a year ago? Ten years ago? Last week?

- How has this study shown you Jesus is more than a miracle worker? How has it strengthened your desire to focus on His mission rather than your ambitions?

PRAY

Close your group time in prayer. Pray that we would see Jesus, not just as a miracle worker, but as our Lord and Savior who loves us and wants us to look more like Himself. Pray that we would be concerned about His mission and not our own desires.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How can we develop a greater sense of wonder over what Jesus has done?

 - Is there any part of your life right now in which you are struggling with Jesus' timing? How does this week's passage encourage you?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 2:11.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 3:1-36.

JOHN 2:1-25

2:1–2. Third day is probably counted from Jesus’s encounter with Nathanael. Cana of Galilee was later the site of Jesus’s third sign (“the second sign” performed in Cana, 4:54). Jewish weddings were community events, a time of special focus not just on bride and groom but also on their extended families. Jesus’s mother may have been a friend of the family, helping behind the scenes. Jesus’s disciples probably included the five mentioned in 1:35–51.

Notes:

2:3. The wedding party’s running out of wine ironically calls to mind the spiritual barrenness of first-century Judaism.

2:4. Jesus’s use of woman to address his mother established a polite but firm distance between them, as did his question: What does that have to do with you and me? On Jesus’s hour has not yet come, cp. 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20. Because of misconceptions about the coming Messiah, Jesus chose not to reveal himself openly to Israel (though he did perform numerous messianic “signs”; see note at 2:11). John portrays Jesus as the “elusive Christ” via Jesus’s pattern of occasional withdrawal (7:6–9; 10:40–41; 11:56–57), his realism about people’s true motives (2:23–25), and his ability to elude his opponents when charged with blasphemy (7:44; 8:59; 10:39). Jesus remained elusive until his time finally arrived (12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1).

2:5. Mary’s instruction, Do whatever he tells you, recalls Pharaoh’s instructions in Gn 41:55.

2:6. The number of jars (six) may indicate incompleteness since seven represented fullness. Since each contained twenty or thirty gallons, this added up to as much as one hundred eighty gallons. The Jewish purification ritual may have involved the washing of the guests’ hands and certain utensils used at the wedding.

2:7. Filled them to the brim points to the abundance of Jesus’s messianic provision (3:34).

2:8–9. The headwaiter was in charge of catering. He supervised the serving of food and drink, and employed several servants.

2:10. John shows Jesus not only miraculously making wine, but making high-quality wine.

2:11. The fact that Jesus's turning of water into wine at the wedding is called the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, leads the reader to expect more signs to follow. The corresponding reference in 4:54 is to Jesus's healing of the royal official's son again while at Cana, "the second sign Jesus performed after he came from Judea to Galilee." Beyond this, Jesus's signs include the non-miraculous but prophetic temple clearing (2:13–22, one of Jesus's Judean signs; cp. v. 23; 3:2); his healing of a lame man (5:1–15); the feeding of the crowds (6:1–15); the healing of the man born blind (chap. 9); and the raising of Lazarus (chap. 11).

Notes:

In each case, the emphasis is on the way the "sign" revealed Jesus's messianic nature (12:37–40; 20:30–31) and on the striking nature of the feat. These signs pointed unmistakably to Jesus as Messiah—whether it be the large quantity and high quality of wine (2:6, 10); the short span required by Jesus to "rebuild" the temple (vv. 19–20); the long-distance healing of the royal official's son (4:47, 49–50); the lame man's thirty-eight years as an invalid (5:5); the abundance of food Jesus produced (6:13); the man's congenital blindness (9:1–2); or Lazarus's four days in the tomb (11:17, 39). The phrases he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him hark back to 1:14.

2:12. Jesus went down from Cana (in the hill country) to Capernaum (situated by the Sea of Galilee). Capernaum was about fifteen miles northeast of Cana and could be reached in a day's journey. Capernaum served as Jesus's headquarters after John the Baptist's imprisonment (Mt 4:12–13; Lk 4:28–31; cp. Mt 9:1).

2:13–22. Jesus's first major confrontation with Jewish leaders in John's Gospel took place when he cleared the Jerusalem temple at Passover. The Synoptic Gospels record a later clearing, just before the crucifixion (Mk 11:15–19). By clearing the temple, Jesus displayed zeal for God's house (Jn 2:17; cp. Ps 69:9) and performed a sign of judgment on the Jewish leaders who had allowed worship to deteriorate into commerce. His action also prophetically foreshadowed his crucifixion and resurrection, which would establish him as the new center of worship, replacing the old temple.

2:13. This is the first reference to a Jewish festival in John's Gospel and the first reference to Passover. Later, John referred to two more Passovers at 6:4 (Jesus in Galilee) and 11:55; 12:1

(Jesus's final Passover in Jerusalem). Beyond this, Mt 12:1 may refer to another Passover not recorded in John. If so, Jesus's ministry included four Passovers and extended over about three and one-half years, spanning from AD 29 to 33. Apart from these Passover references, John also mentioned Jesus's activities at an unnamed Jewish festival in 5:1 (possibly Shelters); at the Festival of Tabernacles (or Shelters in 7:2); and at the Festival of Dedication (or Hanukkah) in 10:22. People are described as traveling up to Jerusalem because it was located at a higher elevation than Galilee.

Notes:

2:14. Merchants (selling oxen, sheep, and doves) and money changers (exchanging idol-free coins for those tainted with pagan engravings) eased the logistical burden on pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem from afar by providing them with appropriate animals and coins for sacrifices and offerings. By conducting their business within the temple, however, they disrupted worship (esp. for Gentiles) and obstructed the temple's purpose.

2:17. Jesus's clearing of the temple reminded his disciples of the righteous sufferer in Ps 69:9. First-century Jews expected Messiah to purge and reconstitute the temple. Jesus was passionately concerned for the holiness and purity of God's house.

2:20. This temple took forty-six years to build seems to indicate that the reconstruction of the second temple had taken forty-six years. Alternatively, it can be read: "This sanctuary was completed forty-six years ago [and has stood since that time]." The Jews were amazed that Jesus claimed he could raise it up in three days, an impossibly short time. The misunderstanding is cleared up in v. 21.

2:22. The Scripture may be Ps 69:9 (cited in Jn 2:17). The statement Jesus had made refers to v. 19.

2:23–25. Believed ... would not entrust himself is a wordplay in the original Greek. Jesus's knowledge of people's hearts was displayed in his encounters with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman; see note at v. 4.