



**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

**LIFE GROUPS  
LEADER GUIDE  
JUNE 2021**

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	JUNE 6	21

# LIVING WATER

JOHN 7:1-52

JUNE 6, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

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## PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 7:1-52. 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 IS THE PROMISED ONE OF GOD WHO GIVES LIVING WATER TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM.**

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**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: YOU MUST BE EMPTIED OF SIN TO DRINK OF JESUS.**

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**GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS HAS PAID FOR OUR SIN SO THAT WE CAN HAVE THE WATER HE PROVIDES.**

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## INTRODUCTION

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

### Notes:

- 1 Where are you from? What are people from that country or region known for? Do you “fit the mold” of what people expect from those who are from this place?
- 2 In your family now, how often do you find that what you say is misunderstood? When was the last time people understood you to say something that was far different than you intended? What happened as a result?

The Gospel of John focuses not just on what Jesus did, but on who He was. Much of John 7 concerns people who were wrestling with the most crucial question of all: Was He indeed the Christ, the promised One of God? The people were divided in their opinions of Jesus for various reasons, including His place of origin and their expectations of the Messiah.

## UNDERSTANDING

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

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 7:1-24.

The Festival of Tabernacles was one of the three main feasts of the Jews, a week-long celebration and gathering for the Hebrew nation. In other words, it was a ready-made platform for Jesus to reveal Himself to the Jewish world if He so desired. Using that platform for political and/or personal gain seemed a good idea to Jesus’ brothers.

- In what way could the brothers' suggestion have seemed spiritual and right to those who were listening?

**Notes:**

- What did Jesus know about their motives that His brothers maybe didn't even realize (v. 5)?

The brothers were right: No one who is seeking public recognition keeps his or her gifts a secret. They gain as many social media followers as they can. They try to make the best-seller list. They climb the ladder. They aim to serve on staff at a megachurch. They study and mimic what other gifted people before them have done. The problem was that Jesus wasn't seeking public recognition. He was seeking to do the work the Father had sent Him to do. That's it. His brothers' focus was on Jesus, who they did or didn't believe Him to be, and what they did or didn't believe He could do. Jesus' focus was different, and it affected how, when, and where He would do things.

- Does it seem strange to you that Jesus kept some parts of His earthly ministry undercover?
- Would it seem strange to you for someone you know God has gifted for a certain task to want to stay out of the limelight? Why or why not?

Jesus' brothers went to the festival, and then He went in secret without them. Their expectations did not fit with His calling. Their understanding did not grasp His teachings. To fulfill the calling God has placed on our lives, we must actively battle opposition and false expectations. Sometimes we'll find opposition and false expectations among those who should know and act better.

- What stands out to you from Jesus' teaching at the festival?

**Notes:**

- How did He further reveal who He was through this teaching?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 7:25-36.

- What truths about Himself did Jesus proclaim in these verses? Describe some of the different ways people responded.
- The people were divided over who Jesus was. What causes people today to be divided over who Jesus is? Are the issues the same or different? Explain.

Everyone who experienced Jesus' earthly ministry knew He was a great teacher and healer. But Jewish history had seen many great teachers and many healers, too. The real question that needed to be answered about Jesus was, "Is He truly the Christ, the unique Prophet sent from God to save His people?"

- When Jesus talked about where He was from (vv. 28–29), what did He mean? How is that different from what the people meant when they referred to where He was from?
- What convinced those who put their faith in Jesus to make that decision? How does this compare to what convinced you to believe when you made your decision?

- Why did the Pharisees want to arrest Jesus? How did they misunderstand Jesus' response to them?

**Notes:**

In deciding how they would answer this question, there were two main issues: Was Jesus' coming aligned with what Scripture said concerning how He would come and where He would come from? And, was He doing the kind of work Scripture said the Messiah would do? Those who rejected Jesus seemed to focus on the first question. According to their understanding, Jesus didn't come from where He was supposed to come. Scripture said Jesus should come from Bethlehem, and this man, so they thought, came from Nazareth. Perhaps they were not committed enough to find the truth and check their assumptions about this.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 7:37-52.

- To what was Jesus referring when He talked about "rivers of living water" that will "flow from within" a person (v. 38)? Why is that an appropriate image?
- Think back over the course of your life. What sources other than Jesus have you been drinking from to sustain you?
- Why do you think we have the tendency to look to other sources when the living water of Jesus is available? What does that show us about our hearts?
- How is it that these people misunderstood virtually everything Jesus said? What makes people more likely to understand spiritual truth?

Those who put their faith in Jesus focused mostly on His works. They asked, “When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?” (v. 31). Indeed, no one before or since has done the kinds of things Jesus did. But some people looked right past such signs. For them, what Jesus said in another context rang true: “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” (Luke 16:31).

**Notes:**

- Toward the end of this passage, what stopped the rulers from trying to arrest Jesus?
- How do Nicodemus’s words in verse 51 show how he might have been affected from his earlier interaction with Jesus in John 3?

## APPLICATION

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

### Notes:

- The crowd asked Jesus many questions in today's story. What question would you ask Jesus if He appeared to you today?
- How would you describe the "rivers of living water" in your life right now?
- Who do you know who is as skeptical about Christ as the Pharisees in this story? How can the group pray for this person, that he or she might open his or her heart to Jesus? How might God use you in this process?

## PRAY

Pray that God would increase your belief in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Pray for increased "rivers of living water" in your life, that your life might glorify Him and point others to the truth about Jesus.

## 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 are you looking to right now for satisfaction other than the living water of Jesus?
  - In what ways do you think Jesus wants His living water to flow out from you to others through ministry?
  
- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
  
- > The challenge to memorize John 7:37-38.
  
- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 8:1-59.

## JOHN 7:1-52

7:1. Galilee (under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas) was safer than Judea (under the Roman prefect) for Jesus since the Jews were trying to kill him.

**Notes:**

7:2. The Jewish Festival of Shelters was celebrated in September or October, two months before the Festival of Dedication . People temporarily lived in shelters to remember God's faithfulness during Israel's wilderness wanderings (Lv 23:42-43; cp. Mt 17:4).

7:3-5. Jesus's brothers were naturally born sons of Mary. Their names were James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon (Mt 13:55 and Mk 6:3). Their poor advice stemmed from unbelief (Jn 7:5) and revealed a fundamental misunderstanding of Jesus's messianic identity (Mt 4:5-7).

7:6-10. In 7:8, Jesus stated, I'm not going up to this festival. In v. 10, we learn that he also went up, not openly but secretly (see note at v. 1). It surprises many readers to realize that Jesus used craft and subterfuge to combat opposition and false expectations.

7:11. Particularly those who hadn't seen Jesus were eager to find him at the festival.

7:12. The charge that Jesus was deceiving the people may hark back to Dt 13:1-11 (cp. Mt 27:63; Lk 23:2). Later Jewish literature called Jesus a deceiver.

7:13. The phrase for fear of the Jews (cp. 9:22; 19:38; 20:19) refers to Jerusalem authorities represented by the Sanhedrin.

7:14-15. The Jews may include Judean crowds and Jewish authorities. Jesus lacked formal rabbinic training (as did his disciples; Ac 4:13), but his teaching and authority came from God (Jn 7:16; 8:28; cp. Mt 5:21-26; 7:28-29).

7:16. Unlike other rabbis, Jesus claimed direct knowledge from God (8:28).

7:17. Only true believers, who are committed to following God's will, could rightly discern Jesus's teaching.

7:18–19. Jesus as authoritative source contrasted himself with vain, false prophets (Dt 18:9–22). The Jews were proud of the fact that Moses had given them the law (cp. 9:28; Rm 2:17; 9:4).

**Notes:**

7:20. This is one of several instances where Jesus was charged with demon possession (8:48; 10:20; Mt 12:24); the same charge was leveled against John the Baptist (Mt 11:18). Other charges against Jesus included breaking the Sabbath (Jn 5:16, 18; 9:16), blasphemy (5:18; 8:58–59; 10:31, 33, 39; 19:7), deceiving the people (7:12, 47), being a Samaritan (i.e., apostate, 8:48), madness (10:20), and criminal activity (18:30).

7:21. The one work Jesus referred to was probably the healing in 5:1–15.

7:22–23. Circumcision was given by the fathers (i.e., Abraham; Gn 17:9–14) and Moses (Ex 12:44, 48–49; Lv 12:3). Jesus's argument was "from the lesser to the greater." The Jews were to circumcise their males on the eighth day even if that day fell on the Sabbath (the "lesser" issue). If "perfecting" one part of a human body on the Sabbath was legitimate, how much more the healing of an entire person?

7:24. Jesus's statement about judging may allude to Lv 19:15 (cp. Dt 16:18–19; Is 11:3–4; Zch 7:9).

7:25–44. The next three scenes (vv. 25–31, 32–36, 37–44) center on the question, "Is Jesus the Christ?" Representative queries (in some cases involving misunderstanding) from the crowd serve as foils for dealing with this issue (vv. 27, 31, 42), in turn focusing on the supposedly unknown origins of Messiah, his performance of signs, and Bethlehem as Messiah's birthplace.

7:26. The authorities probably refers to the Sanhedrin (v. 48; 12:42).

7:27. Some rabbis taught that Messiah would be wholly unknown until he set out to procure salvation for Israel. Others felt his birthplace was foreknown (v. 42; cp. Mt 2:1–6).

**Notes:**

7:28–29. Telling the Jews that they didn't know God got a strong reaction.

7:31. Since Messiah would be a prophet like Moses (Dt 18:15, 18) and Moses performed many miraculous signs at the exodus (Ex 7–11), Messiah was expected to perform miracles as well. It would have been natural for people to wonder, after witnessing Jesus's miracles, if he was the Messiah.

7:32. The chief priests and the Pharisees, representing the Sanhedrin, deployed servants to arrest Jesus. His arrest implied that he was a criminal (but see note at vv. 45–52). The leaders hoped this would discourage people from following him.

7:33–34. Six months after Jesus issued this prediction, he was crucified.

7:35–36. People misunderstood Jesus's statement in v. 34. Ever since the exile, many Jews had not returned to Palestine but continued to live dispersed among the Greeks (synonymous with "Gentiles").

7:37. While v. 14 referred to the festival being "already half over," this was now the last and greatest day of the Festival of Shelters. Jesus's invitation harks back to OT prophetic passages such as Is 55:1 (cp. Is 12:3).

7:38–39. Streams of living water flowing from deep within Jesus's followers fulfill the end-time blessings predicted in the OT. John noted in v. 39 that these streams are emblematic of the Spirit, who would be given after Jesus's exaltation with the Father (20:22).

7:40–41. The Prophet is the figure referred to in Dt 18:15–18 (see note at Jn 1:19–21; cp. 6:14). This

“Prophet” and the Messiah were thought to be different persons by some first-century Jews, but Jesus turned out to be both.

**Notes:**

7:42. Bethlehem, south of Jerusalem in the heart of Judea, was foretold as Messiah’s birthplace in Mc 5:2 (cp. Mt 2:5–6; see note at Jn 7:27). As David’s city (1Sm 16:1, 4; 20:6), Bethlehem had important messianic implications. In this verse the irony is apparent. Some people, knowing that Jesus hailed from Galilee, objected that Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, not realizing that Bethlehem was in fact Jesus’s birthplace.

7:45–52. The Sanhedrin’s meeting highlighted the increasing threat that Jesus’s popularity represented for the Jewish leadership. But Nicodemus’s plea for fairness shows that the Sanhedrin was not yet united in opposition against Jesus.

7:46. The servants (see v. 32) heard many people teach in the temple courts, but they recognized Jesus’s teaching as unique (Mt 7:28–29; see note at Jn 7:14–15).

7:48. Rulers probably refers to members of the Sanhedrin.

7:49. The disparaging reference to this crowd, which doesn’t know the law reveals the arrogant contempt many rabbis had for the unschooled masses.

7:50. Jesus’s previous encounter with Nicodemus is described in 3:1–15.

7:51. Old Testament law charged judges to investigate accusations fairly (Dt 1:16) and thoroughly (Jn 17:4; 19:18). Nicodemus’s plea for fairness was later duplicated by the rabbi Gamaliel (Ac 5:34–39).

7:52. Contrary to the Pharisees’ implication, prophets occasionally did arise from Galilee. These included Jonah (2Kg 14:25), possibly Elijah (1Kg 17:1), and Nahum (Nah 1:1).

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	JUNE 13	21

# SET FREE BY JESUS

JOHN 8:1-59

JUNE 13, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

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## PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 8:1-59. 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: THE GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST ALLOWS US TO FIND FORGIVENESS AND EMPOWERS US TO LIVE WITH HIM FREE OF SHAME.**

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**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE EXPERIENCE SHAME FOR OUR SIN, BUT JESUS HAS TAKEN AWAY OUR SHAME.**

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**GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS REMOVED OUR SHAME BY PAYING FOR OUR SINS ON THE CROSS.**

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## INTRODUCTION

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

### Notes:

- 1 What is your earliest memory of asking someone else for forgiveness or having someone ask you for forgiveness? How did it feel to be forgiven? How did it feel to forgive?
- 2 Has your perspective on forgiveness changed as you've gotten older? How so?

True forgiveness is a precious gift. When we humbly ask for forgiveness and receive it, it brings a greater intimacy and freedom into the relationship than ever before. Today's study introduces us to a woman who was caught breaking God's law and was shamed by the public. When the religious leaders brought her before Jesus, He offered her grace, forgiving her sins, liberating her from the law and shame, and setting her free to live for the glory of God.

## UNDERSTANDING

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

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:1-11.

The scribes and Pharisees were among the recognized religious authorities of that day. Scribes were experts in biblical law. That included the Scriptures and the rabbinical interpretations that comprised the oral traditions religious Jews sought to follow. The Pharisees were known for their dedication to observing all the biblical laws and oral traditions. These two groups represented the pillars of the religious community and the guardians of established morality.

- Do you think the scribes and Pharisees were sincere about the need to punish the woman? Why or why not? Who else should they have presented for punishment?
- What was the Pharisees' goal in bringing the adulterous woman to Jesus?

**Notes:**

The scribes and Pharisees' aim was to discredit Jesus and bring Him into conflict with the Roman authorities. In bringing the guilty woman before Jesus, the religious leaders were not acting from a love for God, for purity, or for justice. They certainly had no love for the woman. To them, she was simply a weapon to use against Jesus. So on the one hand, if Jesus advocated stoning the woman, the trap perhaps was to accuse Him of advocating a death sentence in violation of Roman law. In that scenario, the scribes and Pharisees hoped the authorities would arrest and even execute Jesus. This woman was being used as a pawn by the religious leaders, yet Jesus would turn the table on them by asking a simple question and offering this woman grace.

- How did Jesus answer the scribes and Pharisees?
- How did Jesus' answer to the crowd reveal the accusers' problems?
- Why do you think the older men left first?

Jesus finally said, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Jesus could have used the phrase "without sin" to mean any kind of sin, but in this context it seems more likely He meant the sin of adultery. This

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does not necessarily mean the accusers committed adultery in the flesh, for adultery is not only a sin of the flesh but also a sin of the heart. (See Matt. 5:28.) The main thing to recognize is that in stating “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her,” Jesus was effectively introducing grace to the woman, freeing her from shame and condemnation.

**Notes:**

- What do you think the woman was feeling when it was just her and Jesus?
- What did Jesus say to her? How did Jesus’ words empower the woman?

Jesus said two intensely significant things to her. These two things are closely connected and both are vitally important: 1) “Neither do I condemn you.” God has pronounced a spiritual death penalty on all sins and that penalty has not been revoked. Jesus was showing that God is more interested in converting sinners than in condemning them. 2) “Go now and leave your life of sin.” This command destroys any misunderstanding about Jesus’ attitude toward sin in general and the sin of adultery in particular. He neither excused the woman’s behavior nor gave her license to continue her sinful ways. Rather, He gave her an opportunity to make a new start. He invited her to repentance and faith. He empowered her to live with God and others free of shame.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:12-20.

When Jesus made this statement and had the following conversation with the Pharisees, He was likely standing in the Court of Women under the vast glow of the great lighting fixtures that lit up the great court and surrounding areas. It was a light that many could see a great distance from the temple.

- Since Jesus is the “light of the world,” what does that imply about the world? What does it imply about you?

- What is light's affect on darkness? How does darkness respond to light?

**Notes:**

- Read John 3:19-21. How do John's words in that passage speak into Jesus' teaching in John 8:12?

If Jesus is the "light of the world," then the world resides in darkness (us included). Anyone that is drawn to Jesus the light comes purely as a gracious gift of God, for evil flees the light.

- Did the Pharisees at least partially understand Jesus' statement (v. 13)? Why or why not?
- On what basis do the Pharisees assert that Jesus' statement is not true?

Under Jewish law, when testimony was given in the law court, a suspect could be convicted only on the basis of the testimony of at least two witnesses whose testimony naturally had to agree. In other words, any witness had to have corroboration. Therefore, the Pharisees were discounting Jesus' testimony about Himself on the grounds that there was no corroborating witness.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:31-36.

- According to this passage, what does a servant of God do? What about those who are servants of sin?
- What is God's goal for us (v. 36)?

- Why is freedom from the bondage of sin important?
- What might be a standard for measuring your growth in freedom?

**Notes:**

God's intention is for us to be free from this world's mindset. In doing that, we become bound to His mindset—the mind of Christ—and are free from the bonds of Satan and of sin. When we are in bondage, our attention is on our lusts, loyalties, ambitions, grudges, and other things that bind us to the world. Christ's freedom within us assists us in being attentive to God, His Word, prayer, and His voice. Christ's freedom also changes our habits (from being careless to Spirit-ruled), our loyalties (from being scattered to being prayerful), our relationships (from self-serving to God-serving), and our prejudices. If prejudices exist in our hearts, it's an indication that we do not trust the sovereignty of God to work in everyone's life. Because God is sovereign, no prejudice of any kind can exist in our hearts.

- Think back on the woman at the beginning of today's study. How did Jesus both set her free and also call her to live in that freedom?

## APPLICATION

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

### Notes:

- Why do you think people who know Jesus' forgiveness might still somehow feel condemnation?
- The discipline of confession is important, both personally and as a group. How can we do better to incorporate confession into our community of faith? How would it benefit us as individuals?
- Considering our call as believers entrusted with the gospel message, how should knowing that we are completely forgiven change the way we live each day?

## PRAY

Lead your group in prayer, thanking God for His forgiveness. Thank God for restoring us through the work of Jesus. Pray that when you feel shame, you will look to Scripture and to Jesus to receive power. Pray for those at our church who are dealing with shame and loneliness. Pray that they would find peace and restoration in Christ.

## 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:
  - Think about your current hurts and fears. In what ways do these hurts and fears oppose the freedom of Christ in your life?
  - What has God given you to steward? How are you using these opportunities to serve others and bring glory to God?
  
- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
  
- > The challenge to memorize John 8:36.
  
- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 9:1-41.

## JOHN 8:1-59

## Sinless Judge (7:53–8:11)

This story is certainly in line with Jesus' character and teaching, but it does not appear in the earliest and most reliable manuscripts. This does not deny the story's authenticity, only that it may have been added at a later date. (See NIV note.)

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees had brought a woman who had been caught in adultery to the feet of Jesus in order that He might pronounce the proper judgment upon her. The purpose was to trap Jesus, for if He neglected to suggest stoning, as the law required, He could be charged with being a lawbreaker. (The actual law prescribed stoning only if she was a betrothed virgin; the man was to be stoned as well, see Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22–24.) If however, Jesus did advocate stoning, then He would bring the wrath of the Roman government to bear upon Himself. How did Jesus handle the dilemma? "If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Brilliantly, He did not break the law; yet He ensured the woman would not be stoned. When all had left, Jesus addressed the woman's two greatest needs, self-esteem and a new life. For her self-esteem, He assured her that He, who was without sin, did not condemn her. For her deepest need, that of a new life, Jesus said, "Go now and leave your life of sin."

## Light of the World (8:12–30)

The second of Jesus' seven "I am" statements occurs here: "I am the light of the world." The relationship between Jesus and His Father is of such a nature that Jesus could say that if "you knew me, you would know my father also."

Teaching about His identity and nature, Jesus revealed that He is from above and not of this world. Further, "if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins." Such a statement could only elicit a shocked, "Who are you?" Jesus answered that He was

**Notes:**

who He had always claimed to be, the One sent from the Father, the Son of man.

Many have wondered how a loving God can condemn persons to hell. Our response should be that He does nothing of the sort. Individual persons condemn themselves by choosing to reject Jesus Christ and the truth He came to share with the world.

**Notes:****Truth That Sets Free (8:31–41)**

Jesus made clear that holding to His teachings is essential in order to claim to be one of His disciples. Further, His teachings should be accepted as absolute truth. This truth, and no other, has the power to set a person free. Many philosophies and ideologies make the claim for truth, but all truth is God's truth, and therefore all claims for truth must be judged in light of God's revealed truth and knowledge. To adhere to a false view of reality is to be held captive to ignorance. To live a life apart from God's rule is to be held captive to sin. The truth of Jesus sets individuals free from all such bondage. The Jews refused to listen to the truth of Jesus, instead insisting on clinging to their own understandings. Perhaps the most telling verse is when Jesus stated that they had "no room" for His word.

**Who Is Your Father? (8:42–47)**

If God was truly their Father, then they would love Him. Jesus' made clear that His origin was divine, His mission God planned, and His purpose God willed.

People cannot hear what God has to say if they do not belong to God. If people choose to listen to the evil one in terms of what is considered truth, then they close out the voice of God. The basic disposition of Satan is that of a liar, a perverter of truth, one who deceives all who will allow him to direct their lives and thoughts.

## The Eternal I Am (8:48–59)

Desperate to discredit Jesus, the Jews accused Him of being a Samaritan as well as demon possessed. Jesus denied the charge and immediately resumed His charge that they were living apart from God. He added that if anyone kept His word, “he will never see death.” At this the Jews were outraged. Jesus was placing Himself above even Abraham. With one voice they asked in indignation, “Who do you think you are?” Jesus responded that God glorified Him, that He knew God, and that He kept God’s word. Further, Abraham “rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” This brought utter incredulity to the crowd. They challenged Him, for here Jesus—far from even the fifty-year-old mark—was claiming to have seen Abraham.

Jesus gave one of the most important answers to any question posed to Him in the entire Gospel of John. “ ‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’ ” “What was Jesus saying? That He was God Himself! The only other time the phrase “I am” was used to describe someone was in Exodus 3:14, where God used that very phrase as His name. Here Jesus claimed that name for Himself. No identity statement could be clearer. Jesus claimed to be God Himself in human form. The Jews did not respond with words but picked up stones to kill Him for blasphemy (see Lev. 24:16). Jesus hid Himself and slipped away from the temple grounds.

**Notes:**

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	JUNE 20	21

# RESTORED SIGHT AND SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

JOHN 9:1-41

JUNE 20, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

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## PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 9:1-41. 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 PERFORMED A MIRACLE AND RESTORED SIGHT TO MAN WHO WAS FORMERLY BLIND. WHILE THE NEIGHBORS DISCUSSED WHAT JESUS DID, THE PHARISEES DENIED THE MIRACLE AND THE MAN'S PARENTS DEFLECTED RESPONSIBILITY. THE MAN OBEYED JESUS AND DECLARED WHAT JESUS HAD DONE FOR HIM.

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WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WHILE SOME DISCUSS AMONG THEMSELVES AND OTHERS BECOME DIVIDED AGAINST ONE ANOTHER, OUR OBEDIENCE BECOMES A PLATFORM FROM WHICH THE WORKS OF GOD ARE DISPLAYED.

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GOSPEL CONNECTION: OUR SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS IS HEALED THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SEE THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS.

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## INTRODUCTION

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

**Notes:**

- 1 Think of the person you know who is most ardently against Christianity? How did you come to know this person?
  
- 2 What would you say is their biggest issue with Christianity?
  
- 3 Have you ever tried to respond to their concerns? If so, how did that go?

Whether they find the Bible implausible or Christians uncompassionate, or cannot allow themselves to believe there would be one way to heaven, all the reasons people deny Jesus come down to one basic sin: disbelief. All who deny Christ, for any and all reasons stem from this same sin. Their hearts and minds are too hard to see what Jesus has done and respond with obedience, repentance, and faith. Of course, these problems are not new, they have existed since Jesus' earthly ministry. In John Chapter 9, Jesus healed a man who had been blind since birth. Instead of seeing the work Jesus did, everyone around the man denied this healing could have been done by Jesus. All Jesus does, He does so we may believe in and worship Him.

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## UNDERSTANDING

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

### Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:1-12.

- Why did the disciples assume the man's blindness was the result of some sin on his parents' part?
- For what purpose did Jesus say this man was actually born blind?

In Jewish tradition, people assumed that individuals born with physical ailments suffered because of sin in the lives of their parents. The disciples were merely reflecting the views of their culture, but Jesus saw this man's condition differently. Jesus said this man had been born blind to prepare him for such a time that the works of God may be displayed through him. Jesus was about to help this long-suffering man and show him the power of God.

- How do Jesus' words in verse 3 affect your perception of your own suffering?
- Re-read verses 6-7. How did Jesus use common things to accomplish His uncommon purpose in this man? Why did He use mud and saliva?
- Did Jesus need to use these elements? How else could Jesus have healed the man? How had He healed others?

All that was needed for Jesus to heal this man was a command. As we've seen in this series, Jesus speaks and the wind and waves obey. In John Chapter 5, Jesus healed a lame man simply by speaking. But that is not how Jesus chose to heal this man. Rather, He used mud and saliva and touched the man, as if He were re-creating Him. John's gospel features several parallels to the garden of Eden, and Jesus' activity here is reminiscent of when God formed man through personal touch using the dirt of the ground.

**Notes:**

- How did the neighbors respond when they saw the man had been healed?
  
- Why do you think they refused to believe the man when he said Jesus healed Him? Why do you think some people are more interested in talking about Jesus than obeying Him or believing Him?

The man's neighbors were more interested in discussing Jesus than believing in Him. They found the man's testimony about Jesus unsatisfactory, so they sought the Pharisees' help. Skepticism was easier for them than belief. Too often, we feel like we need to know before we can obey, but in God's economy, the opposite is often true: We must obey before we understand why God acts the way He does.

- Has there ever been a time when you had to obey before you understood? Explain.

> HAVE VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:13-34.

- Why did John note that this miracle occurred on the Sabbath? Why was this detail important?

- Why did the Pharisees deny Jesus' involvement in this miracle? Why were they so angry?

**Notes:**

- What did the formerly blind man see that the Pharisees missed?

The interaction between the formerly blind man and the Pharisees could not be more ironic. Although he had once been physically blind, he could now see. More importantly, he could see Jesus for who He was: the Messiah. The Pharisees could not see God's work because of their rigid and legalistic interpretation of God's law. Denying the miracle was easier for them than accepting that Jesus was a man of God. They knew only God can restore sight to a blind person, so admitting Jesus had done this was essentially the same as admitting Jesus was God.

- What did it mean for the Pharisees to cast the man out of the synagogue?
  
- Why did the man's parents deflect what Jesus did?

The synagogue was the center of social life and regular worship for the Jews. To be cast out of the synagogue was to be cut off from your entire social network—your family, friends, everyone. The man's parents wanted to avoid the same fate as their son, so they deflected their answers to him. The parents denied Jesus to save face with the popular and influential leaders of their society. The healed man alone gave credit where credit was due.

- How did the formerly blind man respond to the Pharisees' question? How was His response different than his neighbors', his parents', and the Pharisees'?

Faced with an opportunity to deny Jesus and the work He had done in the man's life, the formerly blind man declared what Jesus had done for him. Following Jesus cost this man his entire network of relationships. Even though the Pharisees had cast him out, he was not alone. Jesus was coming to find Him.

**Notes:**

> HAVE VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:35-41.

- Why would Jesus seek this man after he had been cast out of the synagogue?
- How did the man respond to learning that Jesus—the One who healed him—was the “Son of Man”?
- Why was the man's healing not the greatest miracle that day? What was the greatest healing?

The spiritually blind Pharisees could not see beyond their devotion to their interpretation of the Law, even if it meant harming the poor and marginalized. But Jesus sought out the weak and suffering man. Jesus revealed Himself to the blind man and brought a greater miracle than the restoration of his sight. Jesus restored the blind man's soul.

## APPLICATION

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

### Notes:

- The blind man's neighbors were more interested in talking about Jesus than believing in Jesus. Why must our belief in Jesus always turn into obedience of Jesus? What does it reveal about a person if they are interested in talking but not doing? Why are both necessary?
- How does spiritual blindness, like the Pharisees', keep us from seeing Jesus for who He is and following Him in obedience? How do we guard against spiritual blindness in our own lives?
- What story do you have to tell about how Jesus changed your life? How could you use something Jesus has done in your life to tell someone else about who Jesus is?

## PRAY

Thank Jesus for the healing He brings, and thank Him for healing you. Pray that Jesus' healing in your life would not end with you, but rather you would faithfully share the story of how Jesus has changed your life with others.

## 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 obeying Jesus allowed you to see something you might have otherwise missed?
  
  - Who can you share your story with this week?
  
- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
  
- > The challenge to memorize John 9:25.
  
- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 10:1-42.

## JOHN 9:1-41

9:1-41. Jesus' identity as "the light of the world" was illustrated in His sixth and penultimate "sign" recorded in John's Gospel—the healing of a man born blind (see note at 2:11). As in chapter 5, Jesus healed on the Sabbath and thus suffered persecution from the Jewish leaders. But in contrast to the lame man of chapter 5, who showed no faith and reported Jesus to the authorities, the formerly blind man showed a progression of faith and ended up worshipping Jesus (9:38). Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their spiritual blindness (vv. 40-41).

**Notes:**

9:2. The disciples' question reflected the assumption, customary in ancient Judaism, that suffering could be traced to specific sins (cp. Job 4:7). The underlying concern of this assumption is to clear God of wrongdoing against innocent people (Ex 20:5; Num 14:18; Dt 5:9). Yet the NT makes it clear that suffering is not always a direct result of a person's sin (Lk 13:2-3; 2Co 12:7; Gal 4:13). We should not speculate about the cause of a person's suffering but realize that even evil can contribute to the greater glory of God (esp. the crucifixion; cp. Jn 12:28,37-41; 17:1,5).

9:7. Jesus' sending the man to wash in the pool of Siloam is reminiscent of Elijah's sending Naaman to wash in the Jordan River (2Ki 5:10-13). The words which means "Sent" may echo the messianic reference in Gen 49:10 (cp. Isa 8:6); see notes at Jn 1:38 and 3:16-18). After 9:7, Jesus is not heard from again until verse 35.

9:14. The mention of the Sabbath here (cp. 5:9) resumes the earlier Sabbath controversy in chapter 5. Jesus had moistened clay with His saliva and then kneaded it to make mud. Kneading dough, and by analogy kneading clay, was included among the 39 classes of work forbidden on the Sabbath by Jewish rabbinic tradition ( m. Shabb.7:2).

9:16. The division among the Pharisees follows the differing ways of reasoning observed by the schools of Shammai and Hillel. The former argued from foundational principles ("anyone who breaks the law is a sinner"),

the latter from the established facts of a case (“Jesus has performed a good work”).

9:24. The Pharisees’ exhortation to the healed man, Give glory to God, was a solemn warning for him to tell the truth (Jos 7:19; 2Ch 30:8; Jer 13:16).

**Notes:**

9:28. The Pharisees’ claim of being Moses’ disciples was undermined by their failure to listen to the One of whom Moses wrote.

9:29. The Pharisees’ assertion, We know that God has spoken to Moses, harks back to God’s giving Moses the law at Mount Sinai (Ex 33:11; Num 12:2-8; cp. Jn 1:17).

9:31-33. The healed man’s major premise, that God doesn’t listen to sinners, is borne out by the OT (Ps 34:15; 66:20; 109:7; 145:19). His minor premise, that there was no precedent for opening the eyes of a person born blind, is also confirmed by the absence of such instances cited in OT or extrabiblical sources. The man’s conclusion, If this man were not from God, He wouldn’t be able to do anything (cp. 3:2), fit with the common Jewish view that miracles were performed in answer to prayer.

9:34. The Pharisees’ charge against the healed man may allude to Ps 51:5. Threw him out refers to expulsion from the synagogue. The way this was done suggests an impulsive action rather than excommunication based on a formal procedure.

9:39-41. Giving sight to the righteous blind (Ps 146:8; Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7,18) and blinding unrighteous persons who can see (Isa 6:10; 42:19; Jer 5:21; cp. Mt 13:13-15; Jn 12:40) are common OT themes. Elsewhere, Jesus called the Pharisees “blind guides” (Mt 23:16; cp. 15:14; 23:26).

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	JUNE 27	21

# THE GOOD SHEPHERD

JOHN 10:1-42

JUNE 27, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

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## PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 10:1-42. 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 IS THE ONLY WAY TO SALVATION, AND HE LOVES AND CARES FOR HIS CHURCH.

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WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE MUST KNOW JESUS' VOICE AND FOLLOW HIM IN ORDER TO AVOID THE SCHEMES OF OUR ENEMY, THE DEVIL.

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GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD, LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF HIS SHEEP, THE CHURCH.

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## INTRODUCTION

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

### Notes:

- 1 What do you know about being a shepherd? How much do you know about the care of sheep? How do you suppose raising sheep differed in the first century from now?
- 2 What were the responsibilities of a first-century shepherd? In what ways does this example help us to relate to Jesus' ministry to us? What might be a similar analogy from our culture?

Sheep were a major part of the economy in first-century Palestine, especially for the shepherds. Sheep provided food, clothing, and money. Needless to say, sheep were valuable and had to be well-guarded and cared for. Shepherds in the first century stayed with their sheep. They led them out to the pasture in the day, watched over them, and then led them back to safety at night. Shepherds could call their sheep, and they would come running like a well-trained dog. Shepherds knew everything about the sheep they cared for. Jesus said that He is a good shepherd. He cares for us and protects us, and we are valuable to Him. This illustration helps us to understand how devoted Jesus is to the care of His people.

## UNDERSTANDING

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

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:1-10.

- What is the purpose of the sheep pen? If we, as believers, are in the sheep pen, what does that represent for us?

- Who would the modern “thieves and robbers” be who enter “some other way”? How can they be identified?

**Notes:**

- Who is the doorkeeper in this illustration? Who might the doorkeepers in the church be?

It is hard to say exactly what Jesus meant by the “sheep pen,” other than to say it is a place of protection. If we are Christ’s, then He keeps us safe from robbers and thieves and predators who would seek to do us harm. In Psalm 23, David likened the Lord to a shepherd saying, “your rod and Your staff—they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4). The rod and staff could be weapons used to drive off predators who sought to harm the sheep. Jesus said that He will care for us like a good shepherd. He will watch over our souls, and He will keep those who would spiritually harm us at bay.

- Why wouldn’t the sheep follow the voice of a stranger? Have you ever had a pet that would only come when you or a family member called him?
- What was Jesus saying about the nature of discipleship when He said, “They will never follow a stranger” (v. 5)? Where can we learn to recognize the voice of Jesus?

If thieves and robbers weren’t enough, the sheep were also in danger from those who would lead them astray. Jesus said His sheep will hear His voice and follow Him. Shepherds were not like cowboys. Instead of driving the flock from behind, shepherds went out first, and the sheep followed their shepherd as he called them. Because the shepherd is with the flock every day, they know his voice and call, and they will only respond to him.

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We learn to hear the voice of Jesus over the voice of the world by studying Scripture. In the Bible, we hear the voice of the Lord. The more we study and read it, the easier it is for us to discern how Jesus would have us act in situations in life and the easier it will be for us to judge right from wrong.

**Notes:**

- Who is the thief that “comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy” (v. 10)? How does Jesus provide a more abundant life? How has Jesus made your life more abundant?

Jesus is the door to salvation because “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Anyone or any religion that claims to get people into heaven except by Jesus Christ is simply a robber and a thief.

There are false teachers in the world who make a living by taking advantage of Jesus’s flock. They preach for their own profit, and they deceive people by making promises in God’s name that God Himself never made. Jesus is not like that. Jesus came for the benefit of His people, not to rob them of their possessions. Jesus came to give us life, not to steal it from us. Instead of taking advantage of the sheep, Jesus lays down His own life for their benefit.

Jesus said, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). Jesus did not come to take advantage of us; He came to care for us. Our heavenly Father loves us, and He takes pleasure in giving us the kingdom. We can be confident in our lives and in our salvation because Jesus, the Good Shepherd, watches over us and protects us.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:11-30.

- What specific examples did Jesus give in this passage of His provision for His sheep?

- What are the ways Jesus speaks to His sheep today? How do the sheep respond to the Good Shepherd?

**Notes:**

The good shepherd is the one who loves the sheep enough to lay down his life for them. That's how we know that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. And because we are certain He is good, we can trust Him to lead us in the right way. The flock hears the voice of Jesus through the Word of God as well as through the spiritual leadership of our pastors as they represent Jesus.

- What characterizes a life satisfied in Christ?
- What gives the Good Shepherd ownership of and total commitment to the sheep?

Christ has already proven His willingness to die so the “sheep” can live. He has already defeated the predator of our souls. He will not abandon us or run away for self-preservation. He is not obligated; He stays because He loves.

- What did Jesus say about the sheep that belong to Him? Which of these is most important to you?
- Why is it important to be known? Why can it be unsettling for Jesus to know us completely? How can we be comforted by the fact that we are known by Him?
- Read John 10:30 again. How would you describe the relationship between the Son and the Father to someone unfamiliar with Christianity?

The line of questioning Jesus faced in John 10 is the same that would lead to His death. He clearly stated that He is God, which the Jewish religious leaders took to be blasphemous. But Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed Son of God, and our salvation is secure in Him.

**Notes:**

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:31-42.

- Why did the Jews seek to stone Jesus in these verses?
- How is this an ongoing theme in the Gospel of John?
- How does this give further evidence that the truth about Jesus is only seen by those to whom it has been revealed?

Once again, the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy. Yet, Jesus stated clearly that He was doing the work of His Father and the evidence was found in the works He was doing. Still, the Jews spiritual blindness persisted, and they were unable to receive the truth. As those who have received spiritual sight and understanding through Jesus, we must seek to be familiar with His voice and to follow Him alone.

## APPLICATION

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

### Notes:

- How does it affect you to know that Jesus watches out for you every moment?
- Have you spent enough time in God's Word to recognize the voice of Jesus from the voice of the world? What are some ways we could learn to hear Christ more effectively?
- If we realize that Satan, the great thief, has come to "steal and to kill and to destroy," how might that move us to pray for our families and friends?

## PRAY

Offer a time for group members to pray aloud. Thank the Lord for being our shepherd. Thank Him for opening our ears and eyes to hear and see the good things in His Word. Ask the Lord to deliver us, our families, and our friends from those who would harm the flock of Christ. Close by asking the Father to show others that Jesus is the only way to salvation.

## 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 specific challenges are you facing today? What is one step you can take this week to trust the Good Shepherd in that specific area?
  - In what area of your life are you most tempted to listen to Satan's lies? How does spending time in the Word help to silence the voice of Satan and help you hear the voice of Jesus?
  
- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
  
- > The challenge to memorize John 10:14.
  
- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 11:1-57.

## JOHN 10:1-42

## The Good Shepherd (10:1–21)

One of the great images of Jesus is as the “good Shepherd.” First, He is the gate to the sheep pen, meaning that no one can enter the fold through any other means than Jesus Himself. Only through Jesus Christ can anyone be made right with God leading to eternal life. Second, Jesus leads His sheep. No other voice is the true voice of leadership. Third, as the good Shepherd, Jesus protects His flock—even to the point of death. Unlike someone who watches sheep for employment, Jesus is a Shepherd motivated by love for His sheep.

As the good Shepherd, Jesus mentioned that there are other sheep that will listen to His voice and will one day be brought into the fold. More than likely what is in view are the Gentiles who would come to believe in Christ. The idea is not many shepherds with many flocks but one Shepherd joined together as one flock (see Eph. 2:16). Jesus was not forced into being the good Shepherd; He willingly took the role upon Himself, and for this He is loved by God.

## One with the Father (10:22–42)

The Feast of Dedication was the celebration of the dedication and subsequent reopening of the temple by Judas Maccabeus in December of 165 b.c., after it had been desecrated by the Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 b.c. (see Dan. 11:31). This event is commonly referred to as “Hanukkah” or “The Feast of Lights.”

Jesus stated that His sheep are given eternal life and that no one can “snatch them out of my hand.” When a person comes to Christ as Savior and Lord, nothing can remove that person from the state of salvation against their will. If one is truly saved, then that person can rest assured that they are held in the hand of God, protected from any assault to their state of redemption.

**Notes:**

Jesus also declared that “I and the Father are one.” Jesus and God are not, according to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, identical persons but separate persons who are of identical nature.

**Notes:**

At this the Jews picked up stones to kill Him, for it was blasphemy for a man to claim to be God (10:33). Jesus responded to their anger by pointing back to the Old Testament where, in accord with the worldview of the ancient Near East, rulers and judges, as emissaries of the heavenly King, could be granted the honorary title “god” (Ps. 82). If they could be culturally comfortable with that title for those to whom the Word of God came, why did they rebel against the idea that the Messiah would be God’s Son? And if this does not make sense, Jesus argued, then simply look at my life and the miracles performed. This did not persuade the Jews, and again they tried to seize Jesus for execution.