



# Jesus

## The Glory of God

John 1-10

Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church  
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# John 1:1-18: God in a Bod

When the apostle John sat down to write his Gospel, he was not interested simply in adding one more biography of Jesus to the three already in existence. John wrote his book with a very specific purpose in mind. He tells us in 20:30-31:

*“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”*

John's book is not a biography; it's a theological argument. John wants to convince us that Jesus of Nazareth is God the Son. Every event John records is designed to show us that Jesus is God. John pulls from the life of Jesus specific incidents that demonstrate his majesty and deity. Then he wants to show us how that fact will change our lives in some rather amazing ways. It is by believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God that we find life—real life, eternal life, a whole new kind of life!

This first section of John's Gospel (often called 'the prologue') allows us to get to know Jesus before we actually meet him (we'll have to wait until v29 for that!)

Read through the text (a couple of times if you need to) and mark/circle/underline recurring words or themes. After you work through it, share with the group what you came up with.

*1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.*

*3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

*6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.*

*10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God- 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

*14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*15 John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" 16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (NIV)*

## The Word

Unlike many of the other terms in this section (eg. light/darkness, witness/testify, believe, truth, glory), the reference to 'the Word' is found only in this introduction section of John's Gospel. It may only appear here, but it's very important concept to grapple with if you want to have a proper understanding of Jesus.

1. What is the purpose of our words?
2. John 1:1 deliberately takes us back to Genesis 1:1. From Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1-3, what does this Word do that our words can't do?
3. In what way is this Word in the highest position (John 1:1)?

These first couple of verses of John seem strange to us. John gives us a very dynamic picture of the Word. In one sense it's separate from God and in another sense it's one with him. God's word actually makes things happen... God's word is a powerful force. God's word is almost... personal. Take a look at these Old Testament ideas:

*Psalm 33:6 – By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.*

*Isaiah 55:11 – So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

It's interesting to note that in the early translations of the Jewish Scriptures (our Old Testament) into other languages, the Jewish people sometimes replaced God's name with alternatives, including 'the Word'. As one example, a translation of Exodus 19:17 reads: "Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet the Word of God"

From all of this we can see that to say that the Word was with God and the Word was God is perhaps not as strange as we first think. (Or, at least, it may be strange to us, but may not have been so strange to John's first readers.)

4. But this 'prologue' presents something about the Word that goes beyond what any Jew could normally accept. In fact, it would be offensive. What is it?

How does this picture of Jesus compare with how you might normally think of Jesus, or how your neighbours / classmates etc think of Jesus?

5. If we want to explain to people what God is like, what should we do? (also see v18)

## Light and Darkness

6. **Read Genesis 1:1-3.** What connection do you see between this and John 1:3-4?
7. It seems to be that this reference to light and darkness is referring to more than just creation. In fact light and darkness is a big theme in John's gospel. Read John 3:19; 8:12 and 12:46. In your own words, what do light and darkness represent?

8. In John's gospel, light is a way of referring to Jesus himself – the source of salvation and eternal life - and darkness is a picture of evil and rebellion. If we understand the reference to light and darkness in 1:5 in this way, what does this verse tell us?

## **John the Baptist as a Witness**

9. This introduction presents John the Baptist (not the "John" who wrote the gospel) who we'll see much more of in the next study. But from v6-7 who was John and what was his purpose?

John the Baptist came to **bear witness** to Jesus. He came to testify that Jesus is the one whom we should believe in. 'Witness' and the related idea of 'testimony' is another important theme in John's gospel. A Samaritan woman testifies to Jesus (4:39); the Scriptures testify to Jesus (5:39); Jesus has the authority to testify about himself (8:13-14), Jesus' miracles testify to him (10:25); the Holy Spirit bears witness about Jesus; and John the author of this gospel is giving his testimony (19:35; 21:24).

The question John wants us to answer is will we listen to the witnesses? Will we believe?

## **Non-Recognizing and Receiving**

10. If the witnesses are telling the world about Jesus, what is the tragic thing we learn about the response to this testimony v6-11?

It's tragic not only because those who he created ('the world' v10) are rejecting their creator, but specifically, the Jewish people ('his own' v11) are refusing to recognize the one they've been waiting for, the Christ or Messiah.

11. But there are those who listen to the testimony and receive Jesus. What is the privileged status of those who believe Jesus?

## **Getting Personal**

12. From v14-20, John seems to be describing the personal experiences of those who have recognised Jesus as God in the flesh. What was their experience?

13. What does it mean, practically, for YOU to be a child of God?

## **Share & Pray**

1. Share & pray about particular people you would love to see receive Jesus and believe.
2. Spend time giving thanks for what God did with the Word becoming flesh.
3. Spend time giving thanks for what God has done in your life to make you his child.

# John 1:19-51: In the Presence of Greatness

*“I once saw Steve Waugh at the airport lounge!”; “Princess Mary said hello when she visited our hospital!”; “John Howard shook my hand when he toured our factory!”; “I managed to get an autograph of Bono when I went and saw the U2 concert!”*

It’s funny how we react to celebrities. We get excited. It makes us feel special. And there’s no way we’re going to miss out on telling the story to our friends!

In today’s passage, Jesus enters the scene and we’re going to see person after person who meet him for the first time. We’ll see how they react to meeting this great one. And we’ll learn some very important things about Jesus along the way.

1. Who is the most famous person you have met? How did it feel at the time?
2. **Read John 1:19-51.** As you read, notice how this section records what happens in a series of days. Work out how each day is broken up and give your own summary of what happens in each day.

Day One	Day Two	Day Three	Day Four

3. In last week’s study we identified a number of words/themes that are introduced in the prologue (1:1-18) that are important in the rest of the gospel. Those themes were: *life; light & darkness; John; witness/testify; world; receive & not receive; believe; born; glory; truth.* Of these themes, which ones come out in this section (v19-51)?

How does John present himself?

How does John present Jesus?

4. Using boxes and arrows draw a chart to show the chain of people who encounter Jesus

5. Along the way people come to discover some amazing things about Jesus. What are the different titles given to Jesus?

6. What greater things does Jesus tell Nathanael that he will see (51)? What events in Jesus' future might he be referring to?

*Jesus seems to be referring to Jacob's dream (Gen 28:12). Jacob named the place where this occurred Bethel, which means 'house of God'. It was the earthly doorstep to God's heavenly house. Jesus is the way people meet God (John 14:6), replacing the temple, the earthly house of God.*

*When Andrew and Philip meet Jesus, it's not that they ask him for an autograph - their whole world is turned upside down! They come to realise he's the one prophesied in the Scriptures and he's the one they've been waiting for. When they meet Jesus, they know they're in the presence of greatness, they follow, and they can't help but tell others.*

7. As a follower of Jesus, who are the people in your life you want to tell about the One you've 'found'?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

8. How should we go about telling others about the One we've found?

9. What influences us to not think of Jesus in such a 'big' way and not be as excited to have met him?

*A striking thing about John's testimony is that he speaks about who he is **not** - not the Christ, not Elijah, not the Prophet.*

1. **The Christ** or Messiah means, 'the anointed one'. It's a reference to God anointing someone with power. Throughout the Old Testament (the Jewish Scriptures) kings and priests were anointed with oil to symbolize the outpouring of God's authority upon them. But this gave rise to prophecies and expectation that one day the truly 'anointed one' would come - not symbolically anointed with oil but in reality anointed with the full measure of God's own Spirit - to rule and save God's people. This coming Christ, 'anointed one', would come from the line of David, Israel's great king of the past. For two references, have a read sometime of 2 Samuel 7:4-17 and Ezekiel 37:22-25.

2. **Elijah** - a prophet of Israel who lived in the 9th century BC. Malachi 4:5 speaks of the return of Elijah in preparation for the coming of the Christ.

3. **The Prophet** seems to be a reference to Deuteronomy 18:15-18. Again this was a figure who was expected to come in preparation for the coming of the Christ.

*John does say one thing about himself when he quotes Isaiah 40:3 in v23. He certainly saw himself as making things ready (laying out a nice flat highway so to speak), and preparing others for the coming of the Christ.*

## Share & Pray

1. Share & pray about particular people you would love to discover Jesus as you have.
2. Praise Jesus for how great he is - Lamb of God, Christ, Son of God, and King.
3. Pray that we would have a fittingly 'big' view of Jesus.

# John 2:1-25: The Revealing

Have you ever seen that old movie about King Richard? There he is, off fighting the Crusades in foreign lands but then he finally returns to England. When he first arrives, he's dressed in a cloak to hide his identity and because of this he's ignored and ill-treated. But then the dramatic moment happens – he throws off his cloak to reveal the shimmering armour and royal crest on his breastplate. At that moment – everyone around understands who he is, and they drop to their knees to honour their king.



In this passage, Jesus will in a way throw off his cloak for the first time – he will reveal who he is by doing some great and amazing things. But let's see the response that he gets.

## Jesus at a wedding

1. **Read through 2:1-11.** Summarise in your own words the chain of events that are recorded here.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What sort of image do you get of Jesus by virtue of him being at this wedding feast?

How does this compare to images of Jesus that some people might hold?

It's unfortunate that some people think of Jesus being like a monk or hermit– shunning all pleasures to meditate alone on top of a mountain. This couldn't be further from the truth. Here we have Jesus with his friends at a party. Here we have Jesus helping to provide wine! Jesus was someone who enjoyed friendship and good times around a meal table with others. In fact the leaders of the day didn't think Jesus was living up to what a religious person should be so they slandered him as a "glutton and drunkard." (Luke 7:34).

3. How would you describe the interaction between Jesus' mother (Mary) and Jesus?

What is she expecting Jesus to provide?

What do you make of Jesus' abrupt response?

4. In v4 Jesus replies “My time (literally, ‘hour’) has not yet come.” From 12:23-24; 13:1 and 17:1 – what is this ‘time’ that Jesus speaks of?
5. John refers to this miracle as Jesus’ first ‘sign’ (a word used several times in John’s gospel). Signs always point to something, like a street sign points the way to a location. What does this sign reveal about Jesus?

Do you see any “*significance*” in the type of jars that Jesus uses for his miracle?

What is John’s purpose in describing the signs (see Jn 20:30-31)?

6. Jesus’ miraculous ‘signs’ point to his ‘glory’ – a word used in v11 and also in the prologue (1:14). Glory, as it refers to God in the Old Testament, refers to a awe-inspiring, visible self-revelation of God himself (see Exodus 16:7, 10; 40:34). Is ‘the glory of God’ a good description for Jesus? Why/why not?

## Jesus at the temple

7. **Read 2:12-25.** Keeping our focus on the signs for one more moment, if signs point to Jesus’ glory, what’s so wrong with the Jews’ request in v18?

8. What do we learn about Jesus from his actions in the temple?

9. There was nothing wrong in selling animals for sacrifice or in changing money. In fact it was a service. What was wrong was the location where this all took place.

In Jesus’ cleansing action, he’s also fulfilling Old Testament prophecy that speaks about the day of the Lord when God would come to purify his people and bring salvation:

*Zechariah 13:21 – And on that day there will no longer be a merchant in the house of the Lord Almighty.*

10. What is the significance of the Old Testament quotation the disciples connect to Jesus in v17?

When do you think they remembered it (see v22)?

11. With skepticism and distrust, the people demand a sign of Jesus to prove his authority to remove the traders out of the temple. In Jesus' reply, what's the misunderstanding that takes place?

12. How would you describe Jesus' attitude towards the temple?

In this event we see Jesus' passion come through very clearly. He hates the way the temple has been cheapened and the way worship of his Father has been brought into disrepute. But Jesus is also saying that there needs to be a shift in understanding of how worship takes place. In describing himself as the temple, he's downplaying the physical building. The building was the place where people came to make sacrifices and 'meet' with God. But Jesus is beginning to show that a relationship with God is all about himself. The focal point for relationship to happen between God and man is not some physical location in Jerusalem, but Jesus himself.

13. What have you learnt about Jesus from John 2:1-24? Has John's aim been successful for you (John 20:31)?

## **Share & Pray**

1. Give thanks for the way Jesus was focused on 'his time', and the destruction of 'the temple'.
2. Pray that we would be always be open to the signs the Jesus' performed and have faith our in him as the Christ, the Son of God.

# John 3: Born Again

## Read John 2:23-3:21

1. From 2:23-3:2, what do we learn about Nicodemus?

Why do you think John notes that Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night?

What is his view of Jesus?

2. Jesus' reply (v3) seems to have nothing to do with Nicodemus' statement. Is there a connection?

What's his purpose?

3. What meaning does the phrase 'born again' convey to you?

4. How does Jesus explain what being born again means?

When Jesus talks about being born again, he is using categories from the Old Testament. That is why he expected Nicodemus to understand him (v10). Being born again is a way of talking about inward spiritual change that God brings about. To be born again means to be given a new heart to love and live for God. Such inward change is spoken about in Deut 30:6 and Jer 31:31-33. But the key passage is Ezekiel 36:25-27.

5. What connections do you see between Eze 36:25-27 and what Jesus says to Nicodemus?

6. In v9-13 the word 'testify/witness' keeps coming up. As we saw in the first study, it is a big theme in John's Gospel. We've already seen it in 1:6-7, 15, 32; 2:25. What is Jesus' claim about himself in v10-12? (see also v31-32)

7. What is the tragic tone that comes through in these verses?

8. Jesus' testimony about himself in v14-21 reveals God's huge plans for his world. What do we learn about God's character in these verses?

What do we learn about humanity in these verses?

How do the categories of light and darkness accurately reflect these characteristics (v19-21)?

What do we learn about Jesus from these verses?

9. Why is it that people can go to church, and know all the answers, but still not be truly Christian?
10. How do these verses equip you for evangelism? What message do you speak? How does someone become a Christian? Why do some people resist your message?
11. **Read John 3:22-35.** What connections can you find between this section and the story of Nicodemus?

12. What was John the Baptist's view of the character and ministry of Jesus?

13. How did John demonstrate by his attitude and actions that Jesus was superior to him?

How can you demonstrate Christ's superiority in your life?

## **Share & Pray**

1. Give thanks for the work God does in Christians – washing and new birth. It's impossible to do ourselves!
2. Share and pray for those people in your life who don't believe in Jesus yet.

# John 4: Breaking Barriers

"I love humanity; it's people I can't stand!" Sometimes feel exactly like that. John says very little about Jesus' contact with the multitudes. But long sections of the Gospel are devoted to conversations Jesus had with individuals. In John 4 we see Jesus reach out first to a woman, then to his disciples, and finally to a grieving father.

## A woman (4:1-26)

Living in the driest inhabited continent on earth (only Antarctica is drier), most Australians appreciate the importance of water. Without it, life simply can't go on. It's not long since the droughts of last decade threatened disaster as the dams around our major cities emptied and governments spent hundreds of millions of dollars on water infrastructure to try and make sure we didn't run out.

Living in the Middle East without the benefits of modern technology, the ancient Israelites were even more aware of the importance of water than Australians. It's not surprising then, that the Bible uses water as an image of the blessing that comes from God.

Jesus draws on a rich Old Testament background which will help us to understand his words in John 4.

1. **Read Jeremiah 2:13-20.** What metaphors does Jeremiah use to describe Israel's sin?
2. **Read Ezekiel 47:1-9 and Zechariah 14:8.** How is the metaphor of water used in these verses?

Where is it coming from and what effect does it have?

1. **Read John 4:1-42.** From v7-18, note down everything we know about the person Jesus meets at the well.
2. What differences are there between the woman and Nicodemus (3:1-21)?
3. What is Jesus' attitude towards the woman?
4. In Greek, "living" water has the same meaning as "running" water in English (which is just as silly if you think about it!). The opportunity to drink fresh, cool, running water was too good to resist. When he offers her living water, what is he really offering her?



Given the source of living water in the Old Testament passages, what claim is Jesus making when he says he can give living water?

5. Why does the woman suddenly change the subject and begin talking about the controversy over the proper place of worship (vv. 16-20)?
6. What is Jesus' attitude to the location for true worship?

What sort of worship does God desire and why?

What application does this have for how and where we worship today?

7. From verses 27-42, do you think the Samaritan woman genuinely believed? What do you see in the passage that supports your position?

*Three difficulties stood in the way of this woman living as one of God's people. These barriers are no problem for Jesus.*

- a. She was a Samaritan. A mixed race who were the result of the northern kingdom of Israel inter-marrying with the nations, following their defeat by Assyria (2 Ki 17:24). Their religion was a dilution of true Judaism. They based their faith only on the first five books of the Scriptures and they built their own temple at Mt Gerazim around 400BC. There was great hostility between Jews and Samaritans (4:9).*
- b. She had led a sinful life (4:18). Was she shunned by her community? Is this why she was forced to visit the well in the heat of the day (4:6)?*
- c. She was a woman. A common attitude in Jesus' time was that women were less important than men. Is this behind the disciples' comment in 4:27?*

## Some disciples

8. After his encounter with the Samaritan woman, what specific lessons does Jesus apply to his disciples and to us (vv. 34-38)?
9. Given the context (see esp. v30) what is Jesus referring to when he says, "I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest!" (v35)?
10. What are the prejudices that the disciples may hold that Jesus is removing?

When are we tempted to think that there is no harvest to be had among the people around us?

## A father and a son

11. Read John 4:43-54. What does this "second miraculous sign" Jesus performs reveal about him?

## Share & Pray

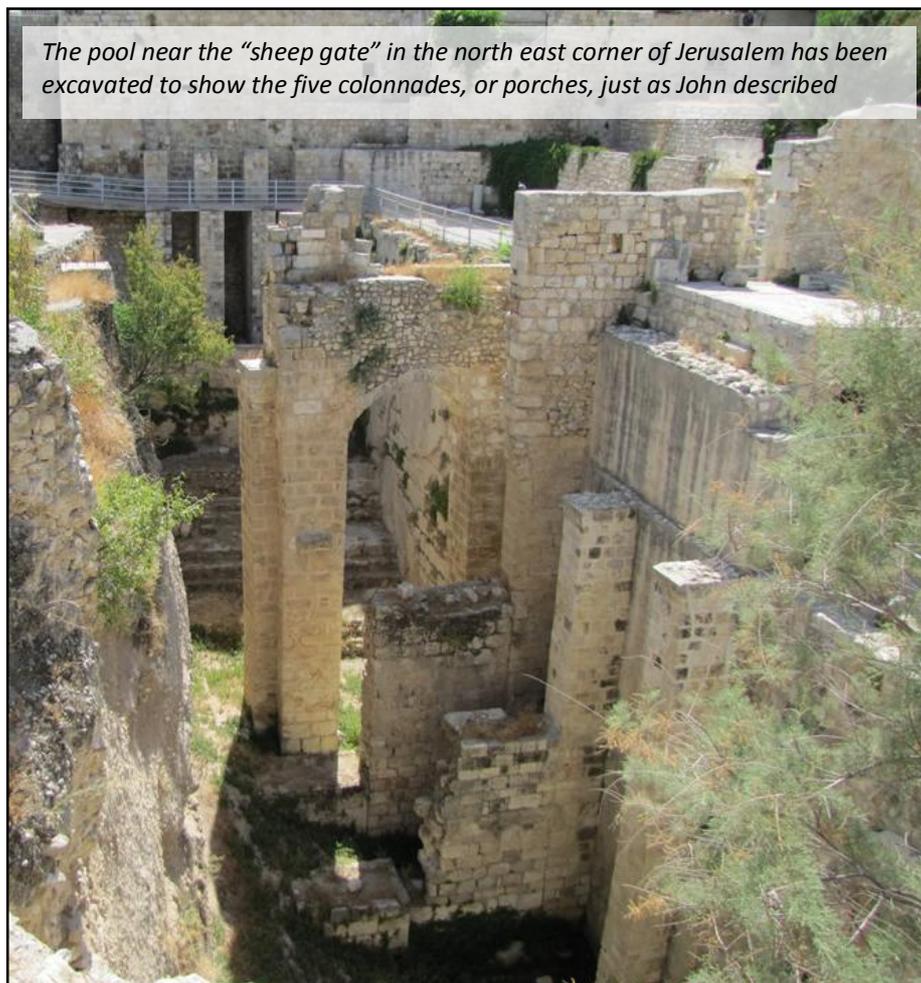
1. Give thanks that Jesus gives life quenching water, the Spirit, to all those who believe in Jesus.
2. Give thanks that no barriers have to stand in the way of having a relationship with God

# John 5: Things Could be Worse

1. **Read John 5:1-18.** Based on the scene and conversation around the pool, how would you describe the feelings and attitudes of the invalid (vv. 1-15)?

2. Why would Jesus ask the lame man if he wanted to get well (v6)?

3. Jesus heals the man. But it's the Sabbath. What happens as a result of this healing (9-18)?



In their zeal to keep the Sabbath, what were the Jews failing to see (vv. 5:9-15)?

4. **Read John 5:19-30.** What insights do verses 19-23 give us into (a) the Father's devotion to the Son and (b) the Son's dependence on the Father?

5. If the healing is a sign that points to Jesus, let's think about what it highlights. Jesus spoke a word to the man and told him to RISE (v8). This man HEARD Jesus' voice and he rose to LIVE a full, complete life, away from the hopelessness and frustration of his previous situation. When you read Jesus' explanation of what he has come to do in v21-29, what connections do you find to the healing?

What does the healing sign point to?

6. How is all humanity divided in these words of Jesus (v21-29)?

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What Jesus says about himself is simply astounding. He is placing himself as the lynchpin of all humanity. It is on the basis of whether people honour Jesus or not that they either have life or judgment. The question we must ask ourselves is whether we believe Jesus.

The issue of belief and unbelief is what v30-47 is all about. Jesus uses the language of the courtroom to say that there is evidence to believe in him.

7. **Read John 5:31-47.** What "witnesses" does Jesus call forward to testify on his behalf (vv. 31-47)? What is their testimony? Are their particular times we have seen these witnesses bear testimony to Jesus in John's gospel?

What counter-accusations does Jesus make against those who are attacking him?

How do the Jews respond to the evidence for Jesus?

What is their verdict?

What is particularly tragic about their verdict (v39-40)?

8. How is it possible to read the Scriptures the wrong way (v39)? How should you read them?
9. Is the picture of Jesus in John 5 a challenge to how you normally think of Jesus?

## Share & Pray

Give thanks for God's Word that reveal Jesus.

Share and pray for those people in your life who don't believe in Jesus yet. Pray that they may believe the Scriptures that point to him

# John 6: Jesus, the Bread of Life

The massive popularity of cooking shows like Masterchef shows that even in a society where full stomachs are taken for granted, food still occupies a central place in our thoughts and desires.

In John 6, Jesus picks up on this universal human need for food, and uses it to explain more about our need for him and the life he gives.

## **Read John 6:1-21.**

1. Why are the crowds following Jesus (v2) and what does this suggest about their faith (compare with John 2:23-25, 3:2, 4:40-41, 4:46-51)?
2. Take a look at Exodus 16:1-20. In what ways does Jesus' miraculous feeding of the crowds compare and contrast with what happened back at the time of the exodus?
3. How do the crowds respond to the miraculous feeding, and what does Jesus think about this? 15

Right from the start we know the crowds are more interested in an exciting miracle than they are in Jesus, and when he shows he has the power to produce food out of nothing they are thrilled. They don't care about any deeper significance, such as the connection between Jesus and God's great act of salvation in rescuing the Israelites from slavery at the time of the Exodus. Like voters today the crowd just wants a leader who can give them food for nothing. Jesus however, has not come to give the kind of life you get from a free feed, and so he retreats from the crowd until he has an opportunity to explain what he has really come for.

## **Read John 6:22-40**

4. In verse 26, Jesus says the crowd are interested in him not because of a miraculous sign, but just because they got their stomachs filled. What is the difference between being interested in a miraculous sign and being interested in Jesus making you lots of bread?
5. As Jesus explains it to the crowds, what is the miracle of the loaves and fishes supposed to be a sign of?
6. What kind of bread does the crowd want?
7. What kind of bread is Jesus offering? How will it make people never hunger again?
8. How do you feed on the bread that Jesus offers (see especially v34-35)?

## Read John 6:41-59

9. The Exodus from Egypt was the greatest rescue that the Israelites had ever experienced. How does Jesus compare his work with the events of the Exodus?
  
10. Why do you think Jesus makes the extreme sounding statements about eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking his blood?
  
11. Can you summarise in your own words what the feeding miracle was meant to show about the life that Jesus offers?
  
12. What mistake did the crowd make when they just wanted Jesus to fill their stomachs? Do people make the same mistake about Jesus today?
  
13. How do you feel about following a Saviour who promises you eternal life rather than a full stomach? What does this mean for life as a follower of Jesus?
  
14. Jesus promises that those who believe in him will never be hungry or thirsty again. Has this been your experience of the life that Jesus offers?

Have you been thinking about the right kind of hunger and thirst?

Yet in this chapter, Jesus offers us food that satisfies our hunger forever. You can't buy it in a grocery store. It is found only in Jesus himself.

## Share & Pray

Praise God for satisfying all your needs.

## A matter of timing

*Ultimately, Jesus is offering us life the way it was originally created to be—life free from sin and suffering and full of joy. However in John 6, we see that there's an important timing issue to understand. Jesus' followers won't experience all the blessings of the new life straight away.*



*On the one hand, as we have seen in John, as soon as we follow Jesus we experience the forgiveness of our sins, the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and the assurance that Jesus will raise us to life on the last day. We never have to hunger and thirst to know God or to escape death.*

*On the other hand, Jesus makes it clear that there is still another stage of our new life to come, the stage where he raises us up on the last day. Until that day, our experience of our new life will be mixed with the difficulties of this sinful broken world, and there is no guarantee of stomachs that are always full or lives that are always free of suffering.*

*The best way to describe our current experience of Jesus' new life is 'Now, but not yet'. He has given us new life now. But we don't yet experience it completely.*

*When people don't understand the 'now, but not yet' nature of new life it can lead to all kinds of frustration and disappointment. If people think the new life is all here now they'll be like the crowds and expect Jesus to be filling their stomachs and their bank accounts and protecting them from every problem. But if people think the new life is completely not yet they won't bother to live for Jesus at all.*

# John 7:1-52: When God Comes to Visit

## Misunderstood By His Brothers

1. **Read John 7:1-13.** What is the attitude of Jesus' brothers to him and in what ways do they misunderstand him?
2. Why should the world hate Jesus (7:7)?

In what ways is Jesus' statement a rebuke to Jesus brothers (7:7-8)?

## The Feast of Tabernacles.

*In the Old Testament the Feast of Tabernacles was a sort of "harvest festival" – it was associated with the ingathering of the harvest of grapes and olives. It falls in September–October time and generally lasted for seven days, but on the eighth day there was a special assembly. During the Feast of the Tabernacles people made makeshift "booths" out of light branches – imitating the Israelite experience of living in tents in the wilderness years. Often the Feast was known as the Festival of "Booths". The Feast had special "rites" which included drawing water and lamp-lighting – which leads Jesus to refer to them during his teaching.*

## Misunderstood By The People:

**Read John 7: 14-44.** Jesus arrives in Jerusalem where there is widespread suspicion and misunderstanding. Some think he is a good man. Others are sceptical. However, folk were frightened to speak publicly about him because they knew that the religious leaders were against him. (7: 11-13).

3. Why were the people amazed at Jesus (verse 15)?
4. Where does Jesus understanding come from (verse 16)?
5. Where does OUR spiritual understanding come from?
6. Where were the Jew's falling down in their understanding of Jesus and his teaching (verses 17 & 19)?
7. Jesus refers to a miraculous healing, which he did on the Sabbath and for which reason the Jew's are persecuting him (probably the healing at the Pool of Siloam referred to in John 5:1-9). In what way does Jesus "justify" his healing on the Sabbath from the law of Moses and the practise of circumcision (verses 21-23)?

There are different "groups" amongst the Jew's, some knowing more of what was going on than

others. So when Jesus refers to the fact that there is a plot to kill him (verse 19) some think he is "mad", demon possessed (verse 20). Others are aware that the authorities are indeed trying to kill him (verse 25).

8. The Jews are making superficial judgements about Jesus in more than one way (verse 24). They think they know how the long awaited Messiah will come and where he will come from. They also think they know where Jesus has come from. They are often wrong on both scores. Complete the following table:

Passage	What the Jews expected of the Messiah (where from, what would do, how he would come etc)	What they thought of Jesus (where from, what doing etc)	Did they get it right or wrong (why).
V 26-27			
V 31			
V 41-42			

9. The Jews have been deliberating about where Jesus comes from. He speaks about where he is going to, and once more he is misunderstood. Where is Jesus really going (verse 33-34) and why do you think the Jew's "cannot come" with Jesus? (Refer back to verse 19 and verses 28 -29.)

### **The Water At The Feast.**

On each of the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, a golden flagon of water from the pool of Siloam was carried in a procession led by the High Priest back to the temple. As the procession approached the "Water Gate" a trumpet rang out, and the temple choir sang, while the priests carried the flagon around the altar. All praised God, and the water was offered to Him as part of the morning sacrifice. This ceremony was related to the Lord's provision of water in the dessert, and to the future pouring out of the Holy Spirit by the Lord in the last days.

The Jews associated the pouring out of water at the Feast of Tabernacles as symbolic of the Holy Spirit and John is clear that Jesus' reference to "streams of living water" (verse 38) refers symbolically to the Holy Spirit (verse 39).

10. What does Jesus say is the source of the "streams of living water" or the Holy Spirit? In other

words, how do people receive the Holy Spirit (verse 38)?

When will the Holy Spirit be poured out in abundance (verse 39).

11. What indicates if we do, or do not, have "streams of living water" flowing from within us?

### **Misunderstood By The Leaders.**

12. **Read John 7:45-52.** The temple guards had been sent by the religious leaders to arrest Jesus. Why did they not bring him in (verses 45-46)?

13. The leaders had wrong expectations of the Messiah. What did they expect of the Messiah, and how did they misjudge Jesus?

14. In what ways is Jesus misunderstood today? Why is he so frequently misunderstood?

### **Share & Pray**

Pray for wisdom as you face various reactions to Jesus.

# John 8:12-59: Jesus, the Light of the World

The Feast of Tabernacles (see Jn 7) had two special ceremonies, one involving water and the other light.

In the temple court in Jerusalem there are four huge lamps: each Feast day these were lit, shedding their light far and wide. Men danced through the night, holding burning torches in their hands and singing songs and praises to God. The temple orchestra played and the light from the temple created a glow all over Jerusalem. In this context Jesus declares to the people "I am the light of the world".

1. **Read Jn 8:12-30.** Jesus claims to be the light of the world (8:12). From the Old Testament passages given, what is conveyed by Jesus' claim?

Psalm 27:1	
Psalm 119:105	
Exodus 13:21-22	
Isaiah 49:6	
Isaiah 60:19-22	
Zechariah 14:5-7	

The Pharisees object to Jesus' claims, but they object on the legal grounds that, in accordance with Jewish law, there are not two witnesses to his claim (8:13).

2. Who does Jesus claim are the witnesses to his claim (8:14-18)?

Why is Jesus testimony to himself valid?

How does the Father witness to Jesus?

## John 8:1-11 – An Added Bit!

If you are using a modern translation of the Bible, such as the NIV, it will say that verses 8:1-11 are not recorded in the earliest and most reliable manuscripts of the Bible.



An early manuscript of John's Gospel

From time to time we come across odd words or phrases added by "scribes" to the original books of the Bible, often in their desire to clarify or explain something. This passage was almost certainly not written by John, but added because some ancient scribe thought it would be helpful. Quite likely it was a real incident that took place, it may even have taken place during Jesus' visit to Jerusalem as we find recorded in John 7-8. However, it wasn't in John's purposes to record it. John tells us later that if he was to write of all that Jesus did, the whole world couldn't contain the books it would take up.

When you stop and think about it, it's a credit to the accuracy of our Bible that we are able to identify the occasional passage (and they are rare) or odd words and phrases that have been added to the Bible by first century copyists.

3. Why does Jesus say his accusers do not know his Father (verse 19)? What are the implications of this?

4. Jesus tells the Jew's he is going away..."(verse 21). Where is Jesus going?

Why do the Jews' not understand where he is going?

Why can't they go with him?

5. What will be the final proof that Jesus is who he says he is (verse 27-28)?

### **Sons Of Abraham, Or Sons Of Satan:**

6. **Read 8:31-47.** Jesus says to the Jews (verse 31): "...if you hold to my teaching... the truth will set you free." In what way does the truth of Christ set free?

The Jew's protest, in effect, that they do not need setting free, they have never been slaves to anyone. In reality Israel had often been enslaved by foreign rulers: to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, the Greeks – and they were presently under the rule of the Romans who they hated. However, they probably meant that they had not been "spiritually enslaved". That too was very dubious for Israel had often succumbed to the worship of idols and foreign gods.

7. The Jews' claimed to be "true descendants of Abraham" (verse 33). What shows this to be false and what shows them to be children of the devil?

The Jews' protest that "we are not illegitimate children" (verse 41). Perhaps they are slyly casting doubt on Jesus parentage, knowing something of the circumstances of his birth. On the other hand, it might be just a defensive protest.

8. Where in the Bible do we see that the devil was "a murderer from the beginning not holding to the truth" (verse 44)?

## Real Faith Or Not?

In verse 30 we are told that "many put their faith in him (Jesus)": but was their faith real? In fact these "believers" are the same group who Jesus challenged to hold to his teaching (verse 30), and to know the freedom that his truth brings. They are the same group who show they are still slaves to sin, and who have no room in their heart for Jesus words (verse 37). So we find that their faith is superficial and they are not ready to truly accept Jesus as their Lord.

9. **Read John 8:48-58.** There was hatred between the Samaritans and Jews – both questioned the "parentage" of the other. Jesus is now accused of being a "Samaritan" and being demon possessed. Perhaps the Jews think that only a "Samaritan" would accuse a Jew of not belonging to God (verse 47). Why do the Jews think Jesus is claiming to be greater than Abraham (verse 49-53)?

10. What does Jesus claim when he says "Before Abraham was born, I am" (verse 58)? Refer to Exodus 3:14.

11. In what ways do we display the family likeness of our heavenly Father?

## Share & Pray

# John 9: You Need to Believe it to See it

1. In what ways is spiritual blindness like physical blindness.

## A Blind Man Healed

2. **Read John 9:1-34.** Jesus and his disciples come across a man who was blind from birth. It was common for Jews to think of blindness, or other sickness, as having been caused by the person's sin. What does Jesus say about the connection between sin and sickness, at least in this case?

In what more general sense is blindness and sickness generally the result of sin (think about Genesis 3)

Once more Jesus refers to himself as the "light of the world" (earlier he publicly made that claim at the Feast of Tabernacles, John 8:12). Here it seems he is speaking only to his disciples. He says in 9:4-5 that "we" (presumably he and his disciples) must do the work of God as long as it is still day, because the night is coming. Probably the "night" is the period when Jesus is first taken away from his disciples through his crucifixion on the cross. Later the disciples themselves will continue his work empowered by the Holy Spirit. In the context of a physically blind man, Jesus reminds his disciples that he, Jesus, is the light of the world – the light without which all men are blind.

3. Why do the blind man's neighbours find it hard to recognise him (verse 9).

## Spit & Mud

Why did Jesus use a saliva and mud paste in healing the blind man?

Some suggestions are:

- *To double the intensity of his blindness in order to magnify the cure.*
- *As a parallel with an act of creation using dust.*
- *To provide some sort of physical sensation to intensify what was happening to the man.*

At the end of the day, we don't really know. But note how the blind man was involved in the process. He had to go to the Pool of Siloam to wash the paste off.

John tells us the "Siloam" means "sent". John's allusion is not to the blind man, but to Jesus himself who was sent from the Father in heaven.

4. Why do you think the man's neighbours took him to the Pharisees?

5. Summarise the response of the Pharisees to the healing of the blind man?
  
6. Why do the Pharisees so adamantly accuse Jesus of being a sinner (v 24)?
  
7. In the table below summarise the blind man's changing/growing response to what Jesus has done for him.

	Response/ Attitude
9:11	
9:17	
9:25-27	
9:34	

8. The Pharisees say they don't even know where Jesus comes from (verse 29). Why is this especially odd (even perverse) in view of John 7:27 and 7:52?

The truth is that whatever the Pharisees may or may not have known about Jesus' earthly origins, they didn't know where he truly came from. They could not know that he came from heaven because they rejected him, and his Father who sent him (8:14).

### Who Are The Real Blind?

**Read John 9:35-41.** The blind man is thrown out of the synagogue – rejected by his spiritual leaders. Being a Jew was of a oneness with Judaism and being part of God's people – to be rejected by the religious leaders was a serious matter.

On hearing of this, Jesus seeks out the man, and draws him to faith in himself. The man who was once physically blind, can now not only see physically, but is given spiritual sight – which comes only from Jesus as the "light of the world".

### Sight To The Blind

Healing of the blind is a mighty sign of who Jesus is. Healing of the blind is extremely rare in the Old Testament, and there is no record of anyone who was born blind receiving sight.



On the other hand giving sight to the blind is one of the pointers to the dawning of the messianic age (Isaiah 28:18, 35:5, 42:7) and points to Jesus as the Messiah.

9. Jesus refers to himself as the "Son of Man" (rather than Son of God) What does this title convey or remind us of? (See Daniel 7, and John 1:1-18 and 5:27)
10. In John 3:16 we read "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn (same word as judge) the world but to save the world through him." However, in 9:39 he says "For judgement I have come into the world". Is this a contradiction? Why or why not?
11. The Pharisees claim not to be blind. Why are they not aware of their spiritual blindness? Why are they especially guilty before God (verse 40-41)?
12. What is the only way to be healed of spiritual blindness?
13. In this account we see the authorities putting pressure on the beliefs of ordinary people. Clearly the man's parents are nervous about getting too involved ( 9:20-21). The man who was blind stands firm in the face of this pressure, even to the extent of being kicked out of the synagogue. Have you experienced pressure or discrimination as a result of your belief in Jesus Christ – how have you reacted?
14. What principles in this chapter could help you improve your spiritual eyesight?

## **Share & Pray**

# John 10: The Shepherd & His Sheep

1. Advertisers sell anything from retirement accommodation to vitamin supplements using the promise of a fuller or better life. Why do you think this is a popular advertising strategy? Name some people in our culture who would be considered to have attained ‘life to the full’?

This idea of a ‘full life’ is exactly what Jesus was on about. We’ll get to that in a moment, when Jesus will say, “I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full” in John 10:10. It’s certainly a statement that packs a punch! But before we get there, let’s understand some of the background to why Jesus said this.

The narrative in Chapter 10 runs straight on from chapter 9. Jesus has just given sight to a blind man, polarising those around him. While this man sees things more and more clearly, the Jewish leaders become more and more obstinate, unwilling to see what is blindingly obvious to everyone else. Jesus sums it up this way in v39, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” Talk about red rag to a bull! Some Pharisees take offense, and chapter 10 is the continuation of Jesus’ response to their question—“what, are we blind too?”.

2. **Read John 10:1-6.** According to Jesus, verses 1 to 6 are a “figure of speech” in order to make a point. So what’s the point?
3. Try to identify who’s who in Jesus’ figurative story.

Man who doesn’t use the gate (thief)	
Man who enters by the gate	
Watchman	
Sheep	
Stranger	

Jesus isn’t going to keep us in suspense very long. According to Jesus, he’s the gate. More than that, all who ever came before were thieves and robbers. Let’s have a look at the characteristics of his “gateness”.

4. **Read John 10:7-10.** What’s the relationship between the sheep and the gate?

5. Verse 10 lays out the massive contrast between Jesus' reason for coming, and the "thieves and robbers". What is it?
  
6. One commentator described verse 9 as Jesus offer of safety, and plenty. How does v9 help us to understand what Jesus means by life "to the full"?
  
7. Jesus famously said in Luke 12 that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." So he can't be talking about "stuff". What else do you think isn't what Jesus is talking about when he offers "life to the full"? Why?
  
8. Jesus' self portrait here isn't very politically correct. Who might we offend by taking Jesus seriously here?

So how can Jesus be a gate, and the good shepherd? To answer that, Jesus explains what the good shepherd does.

9. **Read John 10 11- 21.** What does the good shepherd do for the sheep?

10. There are strong connections between the shepherd pictures in Ezekiel 34 and John 10. What parallels do you see?

11. What does Jesus mean when he says "my sheep know me"?

12. Who are the "other sheep that are not of this pen" (verse 16)? What will become of them? How do you know if you're one of them?

## Israel's Shepherds.

Israel's leaders are commonly referred to as shepherds, for they are to feed, protect and take care of God's flock, His people Israel. Mostly Israel's leaders were bad shepherds who "fleeced" the flock rather than caring for them. So Jeremiah writes "*Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture... I will place shepherds over them who will tend them and they will no longer be afraid or terrified nor will any be missing.*" (Jeremiah 23:1-4)



The Lord instructed Ezekiel to prophecy against the shepherds of Israel "*Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curd, cloth yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock...*" (Ezekiel 34:2)

Ultimately, it was recognised that God himself was the only true shepherd (Psalm 80:1). King David acknowledged "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want*" (Psalm 23). Isaiah reassured the exiles they could look forward to the Lord coming as their shepherd: "*See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power... He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young*": (Isaiah 40:10-11)

13. Some have ridiculed Christianity because God the Father is perceived as a “divine child abuser” for forcing his Son to die as a sacrifice. What alternative do Jesus’ words here suggest?

14. **Read John 10:22-42.** The Jews badger Jesus "... if you are the Christ tell us plainly." (verse 24). In what ways has Jesus already made it clear who he is (verse 25)? Review events of earlier chapters in your answer.

15. What assurance does Jesus give concerning the eternal life of his followers (verses 27-30)?

16. Jesus says "I and the Father are one." (verse 30). How do we see Jesus' and the Father's oneness expressed or shown in this passage?

In this passage, in what ways do we see that Jesus is "distinct" from the Father?

### **Feast Of Dedication**

The Feast of Dedication, today called Hannukah, was not a Biblical festival, it was not laid down in the OT. In 167 BC the Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes overran Jerusalem and polluted the temple, setting up a pagan altar to displace the altar of Israel's God. Many Jews revolted and commenced a guerilla warfare against their oppressors, until eventually under Judas Maccabaeus they overthrew them.



*A coin bearing the image of Antiochus Epiphanes*

The Feast of Dedication was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus in 165 BC as an annual celebration to commemorate the re-dedication of the temple.

How does this fit into our understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God?

### **Share & Pray**

Give thanks that Jesus came to give LIFE, life to the full!

Pray that we would know Jesus better, so that we would understand in a more real way that others things can never be the source for finding life.

Keep praying for others,, that they would come to discover life in Jesus.