



Encountering the Word • John's Gospel •

John 16 - 21
12 Studies

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Welcome to John – Encountering the Word

John 16-21 Bible Study Guide

How to Use this Guide

This Study Guide is designed to stimulate self-directed learning and provide Christian content and resources to support the Bible Study Groups at Trinity Mount Barker. These 12 studies complete the John Sermon Series that started in 2010 which were preached during Term 1 2014.

Bible Study Groups normally explore a study in the week leading up to the sermon. Our purpose in adopting this approach is to encourage the study of Scripture that is not influenced by having already heard the sermon, and allows groups and individuals to independently 'wrestle with the text' to understand what it meant for its original hearers and what it means for us today.

These studies could also be used for private study or undertaken with a friend, but we do strongly encourage you to join a Bible Study Group to gain the benefit of group learning that promotes our growing toward maturity in Christ. If you are doing these studies individually, we encourage you to let someone know, and arrange a time to meet with them to tell them how God's Word is changing your life.

Before starting a study, it is always a good idea to surround your time looking into God's Word with prayer, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Learning Cycle

The primary purpose of group Bible study is to enable a person to learn from the Bible so that they can make sense of the world in which they live and relate to Jesus Christ who is Lord over it. Bible Study Groups should be about more than simply meeting together for Christian discussion and support; they should help people experience genuine engagement with God's Word that impacts on their daily living.

To try and stimulate this type of learning, this study guide models each study around the four stages of the Adult Learning Cycle to help people accelerate their understanding and real-world application of the Bible.

Discovering	Allows people to ask their own questions of the text and relate it to their own experiences
Reflecting	Involves people looking at their discoveries and experiences and thinking about them from different perspectives
Speculating	Creates models and ideas to interpret and give meaning to a person's experiences, observations and reflections
Connecting	Seeks to make sense out of their speculations through developing new insights that change their behaviour, attitudes and living

Every person learns differently and tends toward a preferred style of learning that fits one of these stages. **Activists** enjoy relating real-life experiences to Scripture and are enthusiastic about generating ideas and illustrations to help explain them. **Reflectors** quickly identify patterns and easily relate various observations and perspectives together. **Theorists** are good at connecting together experiences, patterns and perspectives to

generate theories of meaning. **Pragmatists** focus on the end results and their consequences for real-life application to answer the question “So what?”

Bible Study Groups generally contain people who exhibit each learning style preference and through the facilitation and direction of the Group Leader each style can be valued for its unique contribution to group discussion and understanding that integrates what the Bible teaches in order to affect the way we live.



These studies provide more questions than will likely be able to be covered in one Bible Study Group session, especially if everyone actively participates. Consequently the studies use a little *clock icon* to indicate the key questions that are more likely to help people quickly understand and apply the study passage. If you have a talkative group or time is tight, these questions help focus attention on the key aspects of the passage that impact on people’s Christian growth. Please don’t adopt a study approach of ‘only-the-clock-questions’ because **all of the questions** are designed to bring out a richer depth of understanding and application to daily living; so please do use all of the questions if you can. You might even choose to supplement or replace them with some of your own.

Study Resources

There are plenty of Christian resources to choose from to help us study the Bible, however not all materials are committed to the Bible as the authoritative Word of God and Jesus Christ as God’s Son. There are trustworthy reference works and online resources that can point you to good Bible-based, theologically sound materials that we are more than happy to talk to you about. However to make it a little easier as you work through these studies, we’ve provided a list of some recommended resources in the back of this guide that you may find helpful to refer to.

Structure

Although there are lots of ways to breakdown the text — this is the way we have approached it in this sermon series.

Study	Passage	Title
1	John 15:18-16:4a	Jesus Hater
2	John 16:4b-15	Jesus’ Helper
3	John 16:16-24	Jesus Joy
4	John 16:25-33	Jesus Conquers
5	John 17:1-5	Jesus Glorified
6	John 17:6-19	Jesus Sanctified
7	John 17:20-26	Jesus Unites
8	John 18:1-11	Jesus’ Name
9	John 18:12-40	Jesus the King
10	John 19:1-42	Jesus’ Crucifixion
11	John 20:1-31	Jesus is the Christ
12	John 21:1-25	Jesus’ Shepherd

We pray that as you work your way through this study guide, that it helps you piece together the overarching message of John’s gospel ‘... **that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name**’ [John 20:31].

Background

The first 12 chapters of John covers about 3 years of Jesus life and ministry, while 8 of the total 21 chapters (13-20) are focused only on the last week of Jesus' life; chapters 13-17 focus only on one night.

The focus of John's Gospel is the Jesus of history — who He is and what He has been sent to accomplish. The goal in this is not merely informational. The depth and richness of this book is designed to showcase the worthy person and the wonderful works of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

John makes this clear in John 20:30-31: 'Jesus performed many other 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 Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name'.

These two verses comprise one of the clearest and best examples of a purpose statement for any book of the Bible. It helps us get a grasp on what this book is all about from beginning to end.

This theme of believing is the unmistakable pattern throughout John's Gospel. We see people rejecting or receiving the revelation of the glory of Jesus throughout the book.

In fact, this is such a necessary part of John's Gospel that he uses the verb "believe" 98 times (compared to the 34 times it is used in the other 3 Gospels combined). It is only by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that we are given eternal life.

While John clearly wrote his Gospel account with an evangelistic purpose, it must not be assumed that this book is only for non-Christians.

Everyone who walks through the pages of John's Gospel is forced to wrestle with who this Jesus is and whether or not what He said and did is true.

Someone may believe many false things about Jesus, but you cannot believe nothing about Him. No one can be in some neutral position about Jesus between full acceptance and total rejection. After going through this study of John's Gospel, the question will be, 'How will you respond to the revelation of the glory of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, in whose name alone there is life?' Will you turn back and no longer want anything to do with Him? Or will you, like Simon Peter, respond to Him by saying, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God' (John 6:68-69)?

STUDY ONE: John 15:18-16:4a — Jesus Hater

Barnabus Fund is an organisation that exists to help the persecuted Christian church. In 2012 it estimated that 130 countries around the world physically persecute Christians. And every hour, a Christian is tortured and murdered somewhere in the world.

Is the persecution of Christians a modern phenomenon?

Is persecution real or imagined in the lives of contemporary Australian Christians?

Discovering

Why are the disciples and Jesus meeting together?



How will the disciples experience hate by association with Jesus (see 15:21)?

In what ways is Psalm 69:1-18 helpful in understanding this passage?



Helper can also be translated 'Counsellor' or 'Advocate' (15:26); He is also the 'Spirit of Truth'. What might these titles tell us about Him and His purpose?



The word for witness means 'to confirm or attest something on the basis of personal knowledge or belief; to be a witness or to offer testimony'. Why is witnessing so important to Jesus (15:26-27)? Did you notice that the Spirit will testify but that the disciples must testify? (See Carson p529-530 for more help with this)

What does Jesus warn his disciples about (see 16:1) and why does he do that?

What does Jesus mean when he says '*... the time is coming*' (16:2)?

Reflecting

Why does Jesus' reference to God as his Father, cause problems for the Jews?

What type of persecution is Jesus talking about?

How would killing someone be a service to God?



How should Christians engage the world when faced with persecution?

How can we be better prepared to answer hostility directed against Christians?

Speculating

Throughout the 'Farewell Discourse' (Chapters 13-17) in which Jesus instructs His disciples before leaving them, He repeats the phrase '*I have said all these things so that ...*'. Why might he use this approach? What does he want them to understand?



How is it possible for people to 'fall away' (see 1 John 2:19)?



How would you defend against the idea that Christians are nothing but spiritual puppets?

Connecting

Today in many parts of the world, being a Christian means suffering severe persecution or even death. The persecuted church is a terrible reality that we read about in publications from organisations like Barnabus Fund or Voice of the Martyrs. You may even have friends or loved ones living or working in places that violate human rights in pursuit of the eradication of Christianity and its followers. In Australia it is unusual for religious vilification to be tolerated or sanctioned let alone people's lives put at risk through publicly testifying to Jesus as their Lord and Saviour (although the Adelaide Fringe Festival this year intends to go ahead with the show "Come Heckle Christ" that seeks to mock Christians and degrade Jesus).

Does the average Aussie Christian suffer the persecutions mentioned in this passage or do we understand persecution differently than that experienced by people in the persecuted church?

What kinds of persecution are more probable for us in our society?



In this passage Jesus says that Christians can expect persecution. If we are not persecuted in some way, what does that imply about our spiritual commitment?

How do we avoid falling into the trap of wrongfully identifying life's challenges as a form of persecution?



In what ways can we witness to Christ in our daily lives?

What strategies, plans and actions can we put in place to help us not 'fall away'?

STUDY TWO: John 15:16:4b-15 — Jesus' Helper

We should not ask, 'What is wrong with the world?' for that diagnosis has already been given. Rather, we should ask, 'What has happened to the salt and light?'

John Stott

Why do we think it is harder to 'witness' about Jesus Christ in developed countries like Australia more than lesser-developed overseas countries?

Discovering

How would you break up these 12 verses to reflect the progression of Jesus' thoughts in this passage?



Verse 16:6 can be literally translated as '... grief has filled your heart'. What does this demonstrate about the disciples focus on Jesus' news of His departure?

What does the Helper do to prove the world to be in the wrong (note that other words for 'prove' could be 'convict' or 'convince')?

How might the legal language in 16:7-8 (Helper/Advocate/Counsellor, Prove/Convict/Convince) help us understand the role of the Helper?

Why does Jesus stress the sin of unbelief and not just general sin as the Helper's focus?



Notice the progression from sin to righteousness to judgement (John uses triplets a lot in his writing). In what ways does this reflect Jesus' mission and purpose to the world?

Breakdown the logic in 16:13 to identify the relationship between what Jesus says, 'all truth' and what the Helper says. Now that Jesus has returned to His Father, how do we hear Jesus today?

🕒 Jesus repeats himself in 16:14 and 16:15 to emphasise his point. What is His point?

Reflecting

Why are the disciples so distressed that Jesus is leaving them?

What divine attributes does the Helper have that the human Jesus doesn't?

🕒 Why is it Good News that Jesus is going away especially when He just told His disciples that they would be persecuted for being His followers?

Is Jesus' going away an admission of failure or part of some bigger plan? Why?

This is the only passage in the Bible that speaks about the work of the Helper being focused on non-Christians (when the Bible speaks in other places about the role of the Helper it is always in reference to the work **within** a believer). What is the Helper's goal in convicting the world?

🕒 What role do believers play alongside the work of the Helper?

Without Jesus present in the world how can His disciples still hear His voice?

Speculating

In what ways does our response to our circumstances demonstrate the differences of God's perspective from our own?

How does the work of the Helper impact on our thinking about our responsibility to witness to people about Jesus (see 15:26-27)?

What does it mean that the 'ruler of this world' is judged? When does this judgment occur?



If the Helper only speaks Jesus' words (16:13) ... and Jesus and the Father share everything together (16:15) ... what role does the Helper play in the life of the disciples to make Jesus' words known (their testimony)? [Two great books about this are 'Hearing God's Words' and 'Speaking God's Words', both written by Peter Adam].

Why is the glorification of Jesus through the work of the Helper so important?

Connecting

We all know people who know certain things about Christianity but not Jesus as their Lord, and we don't know what to do about that fact. But thankfully God's church is not built by the intellectual skills and capabilities of its people, but by their faithful obedience to tell the Gospel (to testify) about Jesus knowing that the work for its acceptance is the job of the Helper.

What does this passage teach us about what we can do when life is difficult and we're not getting from it what we expected, or we lose the things that provided us a sense of stability (job, money, relationship)?



What guidelines would you make for yourself about reacting to similar life situations?



This passage teaches that the Helper does the work of conviction in support of our faithful witnessing to the world about Jesus. Imagine a situation in which you think you would be completely overwhelmed about talking to someone about Jesus. What does this passage tell you about such situations? What does this passage encourage us to keep remembering and believing in such circumstances?

How does the world's view of righteousness and judgment affect us personally?

What would you say in response to someone holding this worldview after reading this passage?



Why is it so important to read and apply the Bible to daily living? What new actions will you take as a result of knowing this?

STUDY THREE: John 16:16-24 — Jesus Joy

Prayer is not a check request asking for things from God. It is a deposit slip – a way of depositing God’s character into our bankrupt souls.

Dutch Sheets (Christian Author)

Does the Bible encourage us to ask God for absolutely anything?

Discovering



What is Jesus talking about / predicting in verse 16?

What did the disciples think about this prediction?

What effect did Jesus say this event would have on the apostles (v20)?



How does the illustration Jesus used in v21 explain v20?

How did Jesus apply this illustration (v22)?



What promise is repeated in v23, 24? Where else is this promised?



What benefit would the Apostles receive from this promise?

Reflecting



Time is a key aspect of this passage. Is all of the ‘little while’ times referring to the same timeframe, or different timeframes? Why?

What is meant by 'the hour'?

- ⌚ How is the childbirth illustration related to time and duration? What is the time perspective of this illustration?

Why are the disciples confused by this passage? Why doesn't Jesus answer their question (v18) directly?

- ⌚ What does asking in Jesus' name mean? What is the goal of our asking?

What joy is Jesus talking about?

Speculating

- ⌚ What does this passage suggest to us about the way Jesus views the events of the Cross and His Resurrection?

How can something that causes pain and sorrow also bring about joy?

- ⌚ Why does verse 23 **NOT** direct us to pray 'Ferrari prayers' ('Please Lord, give me a Ferrari. In Jesus' name. Amen')?

Connecting

Christians in the face of hostility and opposition from the world can experience true, lasting and complete joy and peace. Genuine Christian experience is rooted in what Jesus has achieved on the cross and in an ongoing understanding of His Word (the Bible). This leads to prayer that will be in accordance with His will rather than our own. In a world saturated with 'self-help' products and services geared toward satisfying personal desire, this passage realigns our thinking towards God's priorities that lead to true joy.



How do we ensure that in our talking with God in prayer we do not ask for things in our own name rather than Jesus'?

If we follow Jesus and participate in God's big plans and purposes for saving humanity — how do we avoid praying prayers that are too small? What big prayers can we ask Jesus?



What is the source of genuine Christian experience and the nature of it? How does this knowledge affect our daily living?

STUDY FOUR: John 16:25-33 — Jesus Conquers

Rock band Queen's famous song '*We are the Champions*' says that facing life with a fierce attitude of survival in the face of personal problems and mistakes or the benefits of fame and fortune is a challenge only winners can achieve.

Does life require that someone must lose in order for someone else to win?

Discovering

In what ways has Jesus used figurative language in the Last Supper meal (see John 13:16; 14:6; 15:1)?

- ⌚ In the Bible Jesus often uses cryptic parables, metaphors and ideas and then explains their meaning to His disciples away from other people (e.g. Mark 4:33-34). Is this what He means by plain speaking in v25, or does He mean something else?

What 'hour' is Jesus talking about?

- ⌚ Are '**the hour**' and '**that day**' the same time period?

What does 'ask in my name' mean (v26)?

Why does God the Father love believers (v27)?

- ⌚ Why does Jesus question the disciple's spoken belief in His divine identity?

- ⌚ Why does Jesus point back to the Old Testament (Zechariah 13:7; Isaiah 63:5; Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27) to tie in the prophecies about Him that in '**this hour**' the Messiah would be deserted by His sheep?



Is peace the absence of hostility that Jesus talks about in v33 or does he mean something else?

How has Jesus overcome the world?



Reflecting

How do you deal with passages from the Bible that are difficult to understand?

Does plain speaking mean simple understanding? Why?

Why does **time** feature prominently in this passage? Is it chronological time or some other time(frame) that is being referenced?



Why do believers have direct access to God in prayer?

Even though the disciples say they knew that Jesus came from God they will soon desert Him. Why?



In what ways is Jesus the victor in the battle for the world?



Speculating

Is knowledge a prerequisite of faith?

Do we need to add '**... in Jesus' name**' at the end of our prayers to ensure God hears them? Why?

Does the disciple's fickle faith discount them as genuine followers of Jesus? Why?

What other types of peace are there?



Eschatology is the study of 'last things' in the history of the world. Why might the last part of v33 be an eschatological statement?

Connecting

Jesus ends the conversation over His last meal with His disciples by encouraging them that by trusting in Him they will have an inner peace to hold onto when things get tough.

The passage reminds us that God speaks to us in ways that we can understand. Does that mean that we should avoid any form of theological study? Why?

What does having direct access to God in prayer practically mean for us in our daily lives?



Being Christian in the world today can be very troublesome. Globalisation, individualism, pluralism, privatisation of religion, secularism and atheism all contribute to putting pressure on Christians to be more tolerant, adopt a more liberal view of Scripture and to replace God with scientific understanding and reason. How does this passage tell us to approach living in a world hostile to the message of Jesus?



What courageous strategies can we put in place to withstand the pressures exerted on us as Christians as we live in the world?

How would we explain to a non-Christian friend that despite what we see happening in the world, that Jesus has won the victory? What victory has he won?

STUDY FIVE: John 17:1-5 — Jesus Glorified

There is no peace like the peace of those whose minds are possessed with full assurance that they have known God, and God has known them, and that this relationship guarantees God's favour to them in life, through death and on for ever.

J.I. Packer from his book 'Knowing God'

Is it possible to know God? How?

Discovering



How does the whole of chapter 17 link the 'Last Supper' conversation in chapter 16 with the rest of the book?

How would you outline [structure] chapter 17? [Hint: The Apostle John often used triplets (groupings of three) to organise his writing].



Who is Jesus praying for in these five verses and what is His main desire?

What key themes are found in this part of Jesus' prayer?

What is significant about 'the hour has come'?

What is the purpose a) of God glorifying Jesus and b) of God granting Jesus authority over all people?



What do verses 2-4 tell us about the source and nature of eternal life?



What does 'knowing' God in verse 3 mean (see Habakkuk 2:14; Matthew 11:27; John 1:18; 1 John 5:20)?

Reflecting

What's the importance of Jesus calling God His 'Father'?

Why does time seem to play an important part in these verses?



What is eternal life?



What does Jesus' glorification of God tell you about His origin and mission purpose?

Speculating

Why would Jesus end an evening meal with this prayer?

In verse 2 are **all** (the) **people** (Note that the ESV uses 'all flesh' to indicate the nature of Jesus' authority) who God has given authority to Jesus to grant eternal life ... the same group of people God has given to Jesus?



What timeframe do these verses refer to (what is the relationship between 'the hour' in verse 1 relate to 'And now' in verse 5)?



How might this prayer unite the disciples and all followers of Jesus?

Connecting

Throughout the last supper meal Jesus' main priority is to establish His identity and His mission purpose with His disciples. He encourages them to be courageous in the face of coming persecutions in light of God's eternal salvation plan for them (and all followers of Jesus).

How does this passage challenge our understanding of Jesus' mission and purpose?

- ⌚ In what ways does this passage confront our own priorities and concerns in our daily lives?

What sort of 'mission from God' does this passage tell us we are on?

- ⌚ Is eternal life a prize / benefit given out at the end of a Christian life or does it have a purpose in our daily lives? Why?

- ⌚ What difference does 'knowing' God make to our decision-making?

Does having knowledge of God establish our salvation?

STUDY SIX: John 17:6-19 — Jesus Sanctified

Christian author Stephen Neill wrote in his book 'The History of Christian Missions' — '*If everything is mission, nothing is mission.*'

What did he mean by this statement and what does it tell us about the potential pitfall of the Christian church' view of God's mission to the world?

Discovering



The NIV translation of verse 6 ('I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world') does not adequately highlight the language of **God's name**. Literally the verse reads '**I have revealed your name to the people whom you gave to me from out of the world**'. What does revealing God's name mean (see Exodus 3:13-15; Isaiah 52:6; Malachi 3:16; Matthew 1:21; John 3:18; Philippians 2:9-11)?

How exactly has Jesus revealed God's name?

What sort of 'knowing' is meant in v7 (compare with 16:30-31)?



Jesus prayed for His glorification for the benefit of those His Father had given Him in verses 1-5. Which group of people is Jesus praying for in verses 6-19 (see 17:9, 20)?



What **word** have the people kept; is Jesus referring to the words He has spoken to them or to something else (see John 6:68-69; 17:8-9)?

What is the purpose of *the people* belonging to God?



Only in John's gospel is the term '**Holy Father**' used. Why would John / Jesus use this term (see Leviticus 11:44; Psalm 111:9; 1 Peter 1:16; Matthew 5:48; John 17:17-19)?

What does '... **they may be one as we are one**' mean?

What protection does Jesus pray for in verses 13-17?

⌚ What does sanctify mean in v17 (you may want to look at a Bible Dictionary)?

How is sanctification related to (the source of) truth in v17?

⌚ What is the outcome and purpose of being sanctified in v18?

Reflecting

⌚ How might knowing Jesus' words be useful?

There is a contrast between *the people* and the world (see 17:6, 9-10). Why?

⌚ The NIV translates v11b as '... protect them by the power of your name'; the ESV says '... keep them in your name'. The first suggests God uses His power **in order to protect them** with the same power that He has already given Jesus. The second suggests **God protects them by keeping them faithful** because John's gospel shows that asking in Jesus' name is all about the character of God revealed in the person of Jesus. Which of these approaches makes more sense to you and why (contrast with 17:12)?

⌚ Why does Jesus need to consecrate himself (v19)?



Speculating

What difference is there between knowledge and belief?

What does unity within the Trinity have to do with this passage?

Why is Jesus concerned after the disciple's protection?

What is God's Word and how is it truth?



Sanctification and Consecration are closely related to Holiness. What might these have to do with the mission of the disciples once Jesus has returned to His Father?

Connecting

Jesus is concerned about the dangers His disciples will face after He has returned to His Father and so He prays for their unity, their protection and their purpose of being set aside for God's mission purpose to the world.



Jesus has been preparing His disciples for His return and has been stressing His own mission purpose to the world. As His followers, in what ways does our sanctification in the Word of truth impact on the way we live in the world day to day?

Christian unity is meant to reflect the (oneness) relationship between the persons of the Trinity. How does our own conduct advance or detract from this achieving this type of unity?



What changes can I make today to demonstrate (witness to) my obedience to the gospel of Jesus in the way I treat and relate to people in the family of God? Locally? Globally?

What strategies and actions can we put in place right now to be protected against the hostility of the world caused by the 'evil one'?



Jesus not only sends the disciples, but all believers into the world to be a witness to His gospel message. How are we responding in our own lives to being sent? In what ways is this gospel focus / mission affecting the way we manage our priorities and decisions in our lives?

STUDY SEVEN: John 17:20-26 — Jesus Unites

To remain divided is sinful! Did not our Lord pray, that they may be one, even as we are one? [John 17:22]. A chorus of ecumenical voices keep harping the unity tune. What they are saying is, "Christians of all doctrinal shades and beliefs must come together in one visible organization, regardless... Unite, unite!" Such teaching is false, reckless and dangerous. Truth alone must determine our alignments. Truth comes before unity. Unity without truth is hazardous. Our Lord's prayer in John 17 must be read in its full context. Look at verse 17: 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.' Only those sanctified through the Word can be one in Christ. To teach otherwise is to betray the Gospel.
Charles H Spurgeon from 'The Essence of Separation' (quoted by 'The Berean Call', 1992)

Is uniformity the same as unity?

Discovering

- ⌚ Up to this point in Jesus' prayer He has prayed for Himself and for the Apostles that are with Him. Who does He now pray for and what does this tell you about Jesus' perspective?

The second part of verse 20 literally says "... but also concerning the ones who believe in me through their word/message". What is this word/message and who is it for?

- ⌚ How would you break up these verses to recognise the purpose(s) of Jesus' prayer?

What does verse 21 tell us is the desired result of Christian unity?

- ⌚ The NIV translates v23a as '*... so that they may be brought to complete unity*', the ESV says '*... that they may become perfectly one*', the NET says '*... that they may be one just as we are one*'. What idea is being communicated by these different translations and what impact does it have on the world?

- ⌚ What is it that Jesus wants in verse 24?

Who are those that have been given to Jesus (see 17:2)?

Compare 17:5 to 17:24. What glory is Jesus interested in?

Why does Jesus call God 'Righteous Father' in verse 25?

- ⌚ What is so important about the love of Jesus being 'in' believers (see Exodus 29:45-46; 40:34; Deuteronomy 7:21; 23:14; John 1:14; 14:20; Revelation 21:1-3)?

Reflecting

Why is the unity spoken about in Jesus' prayer not just a unity with each other?

How is this unity evangelistic in purpose (see 17:20, 24)?

- ⌚ What is the focus of unity? What is its source and what is its goal?

- ⌚ In the Old Testament God dwelt with His people in the Tabernacle and in the Temple. In the New Testament John 1:14 literally says that Jesus came to 'tabernacle' with us. What do the witness of disciples (v20) and the desire of Jesus (v24) teach us about dwelling with God?

How does Christian unity impact on God's plans and purposes for the world?

What does 'glory' have to do with [pre] creation (v24)?



Speculating

Is real Christian unity achievable? How?

How does gospel truth empower unity?



In what ways does the way Christian unity is portrayed in the world today reflect what this passage teaches? Why? Why not?

Connecting

As Jesus closes His High Priestly prayer he demonstrates his desire that God is glorified by the calling together of a people who know the true God and Jesus Christ as the son who He sent on a mission trip to earth to save humanity. John has shown us (John 15:27) that all followers of Jesus are to witness to his life and ministry that causes all believers to come together in unity. This unity is more than simply agreeing with each other but is a relationship between all believers (God's church) that is meant to resemble the relationship between the persons of the Trinity. Given the factions and stresses that exist within the Christian church all around the world today, it is difficult to recognise this level of relationship that Jesus desires for it. Our passage challenges us to wrestle with how such unity is possible and can be practically achieved in the life of the church as a witness to the world of what God intends.



What is Jesus' overriding concern throughout His prayer and how should His concerns impact our own concerns in prayer?

How can we demonstrate to the world a gospel message that holds to Christian unity in the midst of divisions and strife?

What intentional actions can we personally take toward achieving Christian unity?



How do we reflect the love between the God the Father and Jesus the Son in our own lives? Within family relationships? Within our church community?



Disobedience to the demands of the gospel only demonstrates wilful human pride and detracts from our witness to the world. What specific changes can we make in our lives to be united in and obedient to the gospel purposes that Jesus prays for us in this prayer?

STUDY EIGHT: John 18:1-11 — Jesus' Name

Parachute instructor Michael Costello jumped out of an airplane with a novice skydiver named Gareth Griffith. When the novice pulled his ripcord, his parachute failed. Plummeting toward the ground, he faced certain death. Just before hitting the ground, the instructor rolled over so that he would hit the ground first and the novice would land on top of him. The instructor was killed instantly. The novice fractured his spine in the fall, but he was not paralysed.

What has been your experience of personal sacrifice?

Discovering



What are the main divisions in this passage?

In verse 3 the Roman soldiers and Jewish Pharisees bring lanterns and torches, that not only tells us it was dark, it also demonstrates John's efforts to record eyewitness detail to support his gospel account. What is the irony of this story (see John 1:19; 3:19; 8:12)?

What does the fact that Jesus knew 'all that was going to happen to him' (v4) tell us about the role of Jesus in God's rescue plan for humanity (see John 6:64; 13:1-3)?



The literal translation of Jesus' answer in verse 5 is 'I am'. Why might Jesus answer in this way and the detachment of soldiers react the way they did (see Exodus 3:13-14; 6:2; Isaiah 28:16; 42:8; Psalm 27:2; 35:4; John 8:58-59)?

Jesus uses the theologically loaded phrase 'I am' three times in this account. What does this indicate about His focus and intention?



Jesus secures his disciples [physical / eternal] safety (v9; see also John 6:39; 10:28; 17:12) through his arrest. What does this event signify about the future salvation of His followers (see John 10:15)?

What does Peter's reaction to this event tell us about the disciples understanding of the situation (see John 13:7-8; 13:37-38)?

⌚ What is the cup that Jesus must drink from (see Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17-20; Jeremiah 25:15-29; Revelation 14:9-10)?

⌚ Why is verse 11 the key verse that unlocks the meaning of this passage?

Reflecting

If Jesus is aware of who He is, why does He go along with what is happening to Him?

⌚ Why would hardened Roman soldiers fall to the ground when Jesus answers them (v6; see Philippians 2:10)?

Why does John record Peter's action in cutting off the ear of Malchus (v10), but none of the other details found in the other gospel accounts (see Matthew 26:51-54; Mark 14:46-49; Luke 22:49-51)?

⌚ Why is it so important that Jesus' behaviour be correctly understood (see Isaiah 53:1-8)?

Speculating

⌚ John records more than biographical and eyewitness detail in this passage. What else has John recorded?

What does Jesus' obedience (John 14:31) to His Father's perfect plan teach us (see John 3:16; 5:19; 10:11; 13:1-11)?

Who gives Jesus the cup to drink from (v11)? Why?

⌚ Why does this passage connect God's wrath and sacrificial substitution?

⌚ What is the key point of this passage?

Connecting

The narrative that has preceded it informs John's account of Jesus' arrest. John has been very careful in his storytelling to make sure to emphasise events and details that enforce his key focus (see John 20:30-31). As we come to look at Jesus' arrest we need to recognise the 'breadcrumbs' and not-so-hidden-insights that John has carefully woven throughout his book that helps us understand the story. Not only do we recognise Jesus' control of the situation, but also we get a view of His divinity, His mission purpose and His loving obedience to His Father's salvation plan for humanity.

⌚ What does Jesus' example of obedience in the face of apparent opposition teach me about myself?

What prevents us from responding in the same way Peter did to defend Jesus?

What hinders us from being courageous like Jesus in this passage?

⌚ How do we respond to Jesus as a result of this passage?

STUDY NINE: John 18:12-40 — Jesus the King

Today's postmodern world seeks to deny that absolute truth can be known and therefore has no relevance. But Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias says that, "... truth matters — especially when you're on the receiving end of a lie."

What is truth?

Discovering



What are the main divisions, flow and characters involved in this passage (note the six trials of Jesus)?



What is the purpose of John's clarification statement in verse 14?

By ordering Jesus to be bound before He had been judged guilty of a crime, the Jewish leaders were violating their own code concerning the treatment of prisoners. Striking Jesus in the face was also another violation of Jewish law. What do these events tell us about the nature of Jesus' initial trial?



Contrast Peter's response in v17 with Jesus' response in John 18:5. What point is John making by demonstrating this contrast (see John 13:37; 18:10)?

Why does John separate the denials of Peter?

What was Pilate's initial question to Jesus? Why was Jesus' answer frustrating to Pilate (v33-36)?



What did Jesus imply about the nature of His kingdom? What was Pilate's response (v36-38)?

- ⌚ Barabbas means 'son of a father'. What is ironic about the fact that Barabbas was released in place of Jesus (v40)?

Reflecting

- ⌚ How do you think feeling "out in the cold," either physically or emotionally, makes you vulnerable to use by Satan?

Why would Pilate ask Jesus about being a king (v33)?

The Jews thought that Jesus had come to establish an earthly kingdom. What does verse 36 show about this idea?

- ⌚ Did Jesus affirm or deny He was a king?

Speculating

Why did Peter deny Jesus?

What was the basis for the Jew's claim in verse 30?

- ⌚ Why did Pilate ask 'what is truth' (v38; compare with v37 also see John 14:6)?

- ⌚ What verdict did Pilate reach about Jesus? What does the irony of the Jew's reply in verse 40 demonstrate?

Connecting

The Jewish rulers hope that by getting rid of Jesus that they can avoid submitting to Him as king. In doing so they have stated their allegiance to the Roman king (Caesar). As Jesus explains the nature of His kingdom both to the Jews and to Pilate in the hastily created kangaroo courts, He makes clear His eternal purpose and mission to the world.

⌚ Have you ever found yourself 'out in the cold' like Peter, where your allegiance to Jesus was challenged? How did you respond?

⌚ What actions can you take to help you to stand firm in your public witness to Jesus in a world that is hostile to Him?

In what ways can we respond to Jesus' kingship in our daily living?

⌚ What strategies can we employ when leaders in our society challenge Jesus' authority as eternal King?

What are some instances when you have committed the same error made by Pilate? How would you avoid this next time?

STUDY TEN: John 19:1-42 — Jesus' Crucifixion

The Huffington Post reported a story in January 2014 that demonstrates the challenge of austere blasphemy laws in Pakistan that target religious minorities. Two young men who casually asked him about his religion befriended an elderly man in a medical clinic. He thought they were merely curious. However they belonged to an outlawed militant group and were carrying hidden tape recorders. Within hours, police officers showed up at the clinic and played back the tape in which he rejected the idea that Muhammad is Islam's last prophet. He was charged with blasphemy and thrown in jail awaiting trial that will likely result in the death penalty.

Why should people be allowed to hold differing views about religion that are different to our own?

Discovering



Despite the fact that Pilate had declared Jesus innocent (John 18:38; 19:4, 6) he has Jesus flogged. Why (see Luke 23:13-16)?

What was the purpose of the soldier's mockery of Jesus?



Though Pilate presented Jesus beaten and harmless to the Jews they still insisted on his death. What law were they referring to in v7 that made Pilate so afraid (see Leviticus 24:16; Mark 14:55-64; John 5:18; 8:58-59; 10:31-36)?

What power (Gk: authority) did Pilate claim to have over Jesus?

Whenever you see a 'therefore' in the Bible, it is helpful to ask 'what is it there for'? What did Jesus mean by His statement about who had 'greater sin' (v11)?

What did the Jews say about Pilate's duty to Caesar, and what was their point?

What commitment did the Jews make that finally led Pilate to crucify Jesus (v15)? Why was this hypocritical?

How did Pilate's verdict (v4) compare to the sentence he gave (v16)?

- ⌚ Why did Pilate place a title on a sign above Jesus on the cross in different languages? What is the significance of the title? Of the languages? Why did this bother the Jews?
- ⌚ John demonstrates the event and details of Jesus' crucifixion by quoting from Psalm 22:15-18. Why does he do this?
- ⌚ What was Jesus' last statement before He died (v30)? What did He mean by this?

If you have time it is helpful to look at the other references to Scripture being fulfilled (v28, 36, 37) to understand why John stresses this point so much in this passage.

- ⌚ John provides details about Jesus' body being prepared and placed in a tomb. Why? What relationship might this have to His resurrection?

Reflecting

How does this story emphasise the absolute guilt of the Jews?

- ⌚ What is the main point of this passage and how does the structure of the passage support this point?
- ⌚ What assurance does John give of the accuracy of his account (v35)? How does this support John's focus in his gospel (see John 20:30-31)?

Unlike the other gospel accounts of Jesus' flogging and crucifixion, John doesn't mention Simon of Cyrene in his agonising walk with the cross or other similar details about his suffering, struggle, weakness and anguish. Why does this John do this and what does he emphasise instead?

There are lots of historical, location and cultural 'markers' in this passage that have significance to this passage. If you have time and access to good Bible dictionaries, maps and commentaries — it would be worth exploring some of them (e.g. the Praetorium, flogging, Gabbatha, stages in the Passover festival, crucifixion, Golgotha, Sabbath)

Speculating

Some people "explain" the resurrection by claiming Jesus never really died but just fainted on the cross then awoke in the tomb. How is that claim disproved by this account?



What does the emphasis on fulfilment of Scripture in this passage tell us about God's sovereign planning and the nature of His purposes?



A Passover Lamb was central to the Passover festival that surrounds this story. What point is John making about the death of Jesus that builds on Jewish expectations surrounding this festival (see Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Zechariah 12:10-13:1)?

Connecting

In the eyes of the Jews, by getting rid of Jesus they rid themselves of someone who claimed to be their rightful king. In manipulating the Roman governor to kill Jesus they believed they could be free of guilt and also demonstrate their allegiance without corrupting their faith in God. As a criminal, hung on a cross, the Jewish leaders wanted to show that Jesus' mission was nothing but a tragic failure and that their complex system of laws were the only way to God. John clearly demonstrates that they were wrong. Rather than a failure, Jesus' death demonstrated the completion of God's eternal plan of rescue for His people. John emphasises the evidence and narrative details to support our belief that Jesus dying on a cross was always God's plan, no matter how incongruous with Jewish expectations.

What is the challenge and the warning for us, and for our friends who refuse to 'listen to the truth' about Jesus and His kingdom?

⌚ How would this passage help you answer someone who said that the death of Jesus was just the tragic end to an otherwise wonderful and fruitful life?

⌚ How has this account of the crucifixion enabled you to believe, and go on believing the Gospel?

STUDY ELEVEN: John 20:1-31 — Jesus is the Christ

In one of her songs, contemporary music artist 'Jessie J' sings '*Seeing is deceiving, dreaming is believing, it's ok not to be okay*'.

Do we need to see something to believe it, or not?

Discovering



What is the significance of the first day of the week? What might the morning light imagery suggest?

What connection does the Apostle John have to this event, and why is this important (v2, 4, 8)?

Who went into the tomb first? Why?



Grave robbing was a problem in the first century. Why does what the two disciples saw in the tomb indicate that Jesus was alive again, rather than the body being moved by other people (compare to John 11:44)?



John often misses out narrative details such as Mary's reference to the other women with her (v2 '... we do not know ...'), how she got back to the tomb the second time (v11) or that Jesus shows His hands and feet to the disciples without being requested to do so (v20). Why would John do this?



How do verses 8-9 reinforce the specific focus John brings to his gospel account (see John 14:25-26; 16:12-15; 20:29; 20:30-31; 21:24)?

Why were the disciples confused in verse 9?

Who did Jesus first appear to?

- ⌚ Why did Mary not recognise Jesus in verse 14 (see Mark 16:12; Luke 24:16; John 21:14)?

How do Jesus' answer to Mary and her response indicate that she recognised Him (see John 10:3-4)? Why would John take the time to translate an Aramaic word?

- ⌚ Verse 17 could be paraphrased as *'You don't have to hang onto me so tightly, I'm not going away just yet, but go and tell everyone I'm in the process of going back to my Father'*. What does this tell you about Mary's comprehension of seeing Jesus?

What is the significance of Jesus showing His disciples His wounds in verse 20? How did the disciples respond?

- ⌚ What commission did Jesus give the disciples in verse 21?

- ⌚ When did the disciples receive the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2)? What does the forgiveness of sins have to do with the Holy Spirit (see Mark 2:7-12; 16:15-16; Acts 1:8; 8:22; 1 Timothy 2:5-6)?

What did Jesus tell Thomas to do in response to seeing His wounds in verse 27? How does Thomas' response highlight Jesus' origin, nature and purpose (see John 1:1, 18; 1 Peter 1:8-9)?

- ⌚ What three things does John tell us are his purposes in writing his gospel account (v31)?

Reflecting

In what ways does verse 9 reinforce what Jesus has been telling the disciples throughout the 'last supper' section of John (chapters 13-17; see also Luke 24:25-27, 32, 44-47)?

- ⌚ Locked away in fear of the Jews, the disciples are greeted by Jesus' miraculous entrance and repeated greeting of peace (v21, 26). What does this tell you about the disciples understanding of the event of Jesus' resurrection and their role in the world (see John 16:33)?

What was the purpose of Jesus' miracles in this passage?

- ⌚ Why is Jesus' resurrection such an important event for John (see 1 Corinthians 15:14-17)?

John has a stated purpose for recording his gospel account (v30-31). Has it been achieved through his recording of the sign of Jesus' resurrection?

Speculating

- ⌚ Verse 8 tells us that 'the other disciple' (probably John) 'saw and believed'. Did Peter also come to faith at that time (see Luke 24:12)?

What is the value of the written Word (the Bible)? Do we need prophets and miracles today?

- ⌚ John is careful to establish 'propositional truth' (ideas based on eyewitness accounts of fact) that Jesus is the Son of God (v31). Is John interested only in establishing a rational explanation about Jesus or is there something more to his approach?

Connecting

Our passage is more than a simple narrative recounting of the crucifixion-resurrection story of Jesus. John emphasises the evidence of Jesus and his death and resurrection by including eyewitness accounts and details, but his purpose has an end goal. Throughout his book John urges its reader to come to a decision — is Jesus who He says He is or not? In the words of CS Lewis — is he a liar, a lunatic or something else? If He is truly the Son of God, John spells out the eternal benefits for those who believe.



How does verse 17 help someone who feels that God is distant and remote — far removed from daily life? How would it help someone that sees following Jesus has become a matter of daily rituals and duties like attending church events and having quiet times?

In what ways does the resurrection account give us confirmation that the disciples 'message' is accurate and that it is sufficient for bringing life to all that believe?



How does the doubt of Thomas encourage someone who feels a 'second-class' Christian because they haven't had an exciting vision or dream from Jesus?

How might this passage challenge people who consider themselves superior because they claim to have had additional revelation from Jesus?

STUDY TWELVE: John 21:1-25 — Jesus's Shepherd

Costly grace is the gospel, which must be sought again and again, and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: 'Ye were bought at a price', and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

What distracts us from following Jesus?

Discovering



What does 'After this ...' (v1) refer to? The events in the upper room, or something else?

Who are the 'sons of Zebedee'? How many disciples were there? Is any of this important?

What time of day was it when Jesus appeared to them? John uses imagery to reinforce his message — what might this suggest?

Which disciple recognised Jesus and how did Peter respond? Why did he do that?

Once everyone was ashore, what had Jesus prepared for them? Why?



What did Jesus tell the disciples to do, and why did they not ask who He was?



Luke 24:41-43 mentions Jesus eating fish in order to establish the truth of Jesus' physical resurrection. Why isn't that John's focus in this account? What is his focus?

- ⌚ What question did Jesus ask Peter, and how did Peter answer? How is Peter to love God's people and feed them (with what)?

What prediction did Jesus make regarding Peter's future, and what was he talking about (v18-19)?

- ⌚ What command did Jesus give Peter in v19 and how does it connect to the discussion about feeding sheep? Does Jesus mean for Peter to take a walk on the beach with Him or is there something more to it?

- ⌚ John has proved that he is careful with recording eyewitness accounts of facts in his gospel. How should we read his statement in v25? As hyperbole or fact?

Reflecting

Why are the disciples fishing? If Jesus has commissioned them to 'go', why aren't they 'out on mission' somewhere?

- ⌚ What does the miraculous catch of fish signify (contrast Luke 5:1-11 with John 6)? Is Jesus demonstrating that the Apostles are fishers of men or that He is the bread of life who provides for his sheep (John 10:27-28)? Why?

Does the disciples fishing expedition and interaction with Jesus, tell us anything about whether the promised Holy Spirit has arrived yet (see John 15:26; 16:7; 16:16; 20:22)?

- ⌚ Why does Jesus choose Peter (didn't he fail Jesus back in John 18)? Is there a connection to Peter's trials? If so, what? Was Jesus condemning Peter, exalting him, or restoring him to service? Who does Peter represent (hint: **NOT** the Pope)?

Who are Jesus' sheep?

- 🕒 Peter says 'What about him?' in reference to the other disciple (v21). How does the cost of discipleship factor into what Peter was asking?

Speculating

Is there any significance to the precise number of fish that were caught? Or is the emphasis on the net not tearing despite the great number of fish (see Luke 5:1-11)? What is the importance of this symbolism (see Mark 1:17)?

- 🕒 How does Jesus' feeding of Peter with fish help us understand His requirement to 'feed my sheep'? Is Jesus wanting Jesus to change professions from fishing to farming, or does He have something else in mind?

Why might Peter have felt unable to carry out the task given him by Jesus? What will be the cost of carrying out this instruction?

- 🕒 How does Jesus' direct answer to Peter's question about the future of the other disciple (v22-23) help us understand the different ways that Jesus assigns kingdom responsibilities? Does it give cause for personal concern or jealousy? Why?

Connecting

Jesus helps us in this passage to understand His priorities. He makes clear that feeding His followers with His words is the primary focus for which He commissioned all disciples. Even if, like Peter, the cost of discipleship is very high. Jesus' recommissioning of Peter authenticates this teaching priority based on the Word of God reliably recorded by John and other disciples. Our response is to actively participate in church community to effect this commissioning and feed people on the Word of God (the Bible). Despite our many failings (like Peter), Jesus commands us to follow Him (v22 makes this an imperative statement) to feed His sheep so that they can hear His voice and also follow Him.

⌚ If feeding His people through His apostles' words was such a major priority for Jesus, what implications does this have for us as we live in the period between His departure and His return?

⌚ How do we fulfil Jesus' kingdom assignments for us that places a high cost on our lives, in the knowledge that other disciples of Jesus may not face the same costs of discipleship? What can we do to better deal with our thoughts and feelings when life is tough?

How does this affect the way you use the gifts and time that God has given you?

⌚ How does this passage affect your Christian growth? What does it teach about your participation within your church community?

Resources

Study Guides

★ *John Bible Study Notes* (downloadable PDF), St Helen's Bishopsgate
<http://www.st-helens.org.uk/download-file/downloads/John-1-21-Study-notes-Paul-Clarke-2009-10.pdf>

★ *Teaching John*, Dick Lucas and William Philip
<http://booko.com.au/9781857927900/Teaching-John>

Dictionaries

★★ *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Joel B. Green, 'Gospel of John', p368-383
<http://booko.com.au/9780830824564/Dictionary-of-Jesus-and-the-Gospels>

★★ *The New Bible Dictionary*, I. H. Marshall et al, 'Gospel of John', p597-603
<http://booko.com.au/9780851106595/New-Bible-Dictionary>

Commentaries

★ *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, p304-313
<http://booko.com.au/9780310211181/How-to-Read-the-Bible-Book-by-Book>

★★ *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Andreas J. Köstenberger
<http://booko.com.au/9780801026447/John>

★★★ *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, Don Carson
<http://booko.com.au/9780802836830/The-Pillar-New-Testament-Commentary>

Study Tools

★★ *How to Read the Bible for All it's Worth*, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
<http://booko.com.au/9780310246046/How-to-Read-the-Bible-for-All-Its-Worth>

★ *Leading Better Bible Studies*, Rod and Karen Morris
<http://booko.com.au/9781875861354/Leading-Better-Bible-Studies>

Online Tools

- ★ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/john/>
- ★★ <http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/john.php>
- ★★ <http://www.ntgateway.com/gospel-and-acts/gospel-of-john/websites-and-introductory/>

Legend

- ★ = Introductory materials, easy to read and simple to follow
- ★★ = Intermediate level information that helps answer challenging questions
- ★★★ = Advanced materials dealing with gnarly translation and theological issues