

SIGNS OF LIFE

Seven Studies in John's Gospel
chapters 1-12

"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."

John 20:30-31 (NIV)



1. Why Study John's Gospel?

Reading John's Gospel together will serve to give us a clearer picture of who Jesus is. It is a chance to re-focus and strengthen our understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Along the way we will no doubt be motivated to share the truth about Jesus with others.

2. Our plan for Church and Growth Groups

Rather than rush or cram we will be content to get half-way through John's Gospel. And we won't even cover every verse along the way. That's not to stop you reading the whole lot a few times. In fact, that would be a particularly good goal to set yourself. Sermons at church later in the year will hopefully cover any bits we miss in Bible Studies.

Study 1	Introduction	That you might believe
Study 2	John 1:19-51	A Witness to the Light
Study 3	John 3:1-36	Light shining in darkness
Study 4	John 5:1-47	Can't you see?
Study 5	John 7:1-53	Truth that Divides
Study 6	John 9:1-41	I Can See Clearly Now!
Study 7	John 11-12	It is better for one man to die...

3. Some introductory notes

There is a lot we can learn from reading John's Gospel, and you may even be surprised to read familiar verses in their true context. For example, John 3:16 is an extremely well known verse:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16.

But how many people could tell you Jesus first said those words to a Pharisee named Nicodemus? Understanding the context will help us better understand what Jesus was talking about.

As we read John's Gospel there are a number of things that are helpful to keep in mind.

3.1 John has Style

John's Gospel stands out as different from Matthew, Mark and Luke. John includes things the others do not. He chooses to omit things that the others include.¹ It's not just the content that is unique - John's style stands out too. A glance at the introduction (1:1-18) is more than enough to see this Gospel is one of a kind.

We believe that the Bible is Scripture and we believe that Scripture is God's word - which He used humans to write. The Bible is both divine and human and that is reflected in how we read. We use human means to understand it, yet God works in us - to give us ears to hear and to convict us of the truth of what we read. Sometimes we can become lazy and read every part of the bible in the same way - as some sort of history book. But we need to pay attention to the style or *genre*. As we do, we will notice the amazing and thoughtful way John's Gospel has been written. **We will have a better appreciation of what John intended us to hear, and therefore what God wants us to hear.**

¹ Some notable examples being that John does not record parables, nor does he tell us about Jesus casting out demons

3.2 John writes with purpose

Luke is up-front in declaring his purpose in writing (Luke 1:1-4), but John holds his cards close to his chest. However, he *does* let-on in the end. If you have a look at John 21:25, then compare that with John 20:29-31 - you will agree that **John's purpose in writing is that his readers might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" in order that they "may have life in his name."**

There is a good case to say John has Jews and converts to Judaism in mind as he writes, and that he writes with evangelistic intent. This makes sense of much of what he chooses to include and omit, as well as the way in which he writes.

3.3 The shape of John's Gospel

When we are reading small parts of a bigger book it is important to have a clear understanding of the whole. John's gospel has long been thought to fall into two halves. The first half was referred to as the 'book of signs' and the second half, the 'book of glory,' or the 'book of passion.'

A slightly more detailed structure is probably more helpful because John 11:1-12:50 acts as a transition between Jesus 'ministry' and the events that lead to his sacrifice. So **the following structure is helpful to keep in mind as we read small sections of the whole.**²

1:1-18	Introduction
1:19-10:42	Jesus in word and action
11:1-12:50	Transition (a trial 'resurrection' and an introduction to the king who serves)
13:1-20:31	Jesus, his cross and exaltation
21:1-25	Conclusion

4. Read and Pray

As we read John's gospel over the next seven/eight weeks, pray that God would convict us of the truth – that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Pray that our faith in him might be strengthened. Pray too, that we would be encouraged to share the truth about Jesus with others as we ourselves become increasingly convinced of it.

Who wrote this gospel?

We're talking about it as if John did – but he does not put his name to it. It would appear the author refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (e.g. 21:20). By tracing other references to this disciple we can narrow him down to one of the eleven, and one who seemed close to Peter (e.g. 13:23, 19:26, perhaps 18:15). In Acts we see Peter and John together (e.g. Acts 4) for significant periods. So you can join the dots.

Extra-biblical evidence identifies the author as John the apostle, son of Zebedee. It would seem that we are on safe ground to continue referring to this as John's Gospel.

² compare Carson's commentary, pp 103-108.

THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

an introduction to John's Gospel

Being our first Growth Group for the term, this is a short study, in order to give you plenty of time to get to know each other and pray together.

It would be great to have a meal together if you are able. And **why not start the term by taking it in turns to share how you became a follower of Jesus, or where you are up to in learning about Jesus.**

Along the way through his Gospel John draws attention to some individuals. By way of introduction we are going to pay attention to John's *player-cam* and meet someone who gets an important mention. John's player-cam is following Didymus - otherwise known as Thomas. This is an exclusive – the other gospels merely list Thomas as one of the twelve and tell us nothing more about him (Matt 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:8). He gets mentioned in Acts (Acts 1:13), but again, it's just a list. John, on the other hand, gives us an inside look at Thomas in three small cameos.



Time for player-cam. **Read John 11:1-16**

1. What can you say about Thomas and his commitment to following Jesus? (v16 compare v8)?



Now come ahead and **Read John 13:31-14:7**. Thomas does not say a great deal, but he's not afraid to ask the question.

2. What sort of picture are you forming of Thomas?

Now we come to Thomas' main play. John uses this footage to take us to the heart of his purpose in writing his Gospel. Take it in three parts.



Read John 20:19-25

3. How do you think YOU would feel if you were Thomas?

4. How might the other disciples feel towards Thomas when he questions them?
5. Is Thomas' statement in verse 25 reasonable?
6. How might Thomas' inability to believe impact on both himself, and his friends?



And as play continues... **Read John 20:26-28**

7. How is Thomas feeling now? Particularly when Jesus addresses him?
8. Do you think Thomas really touched Jesus' hands and his side? Did he need to?



And as play continues... **Read John 20:29-31**

9. How might Thomas have been more blessed if he had believed the other disciples – without having to see for himself? (take into account your answer to questions 6 and 7)
10. How does John use Thomas to demonstrate his purpose in writing this Gospel?
11. What in particular does John want **us** to believe about Jesus, and to what end?



Think about it.

12. Is Thomas alone in wanting 'proof'? Is it wrong to want evidence?

13. Do we need to 'see to believe'?

14. How much do we need to know for our belief in Jesus to be genuine?

John takes time to introduce us to Thomas. He shows us how Thomas struggles with the truth about Jesus – that Jesus is alive. **In other words John shows us how Thomas comes to believe that Jesus is all that he claims to be.** It is as if we are to identify with Thomas, and come to the same conclusion, but without the need to see for ourselves.

Along the way through John's gospel he will show us others engaged in the same struggle. They see miraculous signs, they hear Jesus' teaching. Some believe and some do not, but that is to be expected. After all:

"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..."

(John 1:10-12 NIV)

As we work our way through John's Gospel it will be important to keep Jesus' words to Thomas in mind;

"Because you have seen me you believe; blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed."

We must also read this Gospel with John 20:30-31 in the back of our minds at all times -

*"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.**"*

(John 20:30-31 NIV)

John's gospel is written to persuade and to convince us that Jesus is who he claims to be. That he is God's chosen king, the bread of life, the way to God, the Lamb of God, the resurrection and the life..... the way that we can become God's children, and have eternal life.



Some things to pray about...

The disciple Jesus loved

A number of times John refers to the disciple whom Jesus loved (13:23, 19:26, 21:20). And in the end he says "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down." So in all probability John refers to himself as the disciple Jesus loved.

At first glance this way of speaking may seem snobbish or elitist. But I wonder if we are supposed to read it differently. Perhaps John is instead acknowledging his indebtedness to Jesus. Perhaps he is expressing his wonder that Jesus would love him enough to give his life for him? He may simply be underlining that he now recognises Jesus' love for him.

A WITNESS TO THE LIGHT

John 1:19-51

Recap on Last week: Why does John write his Gospel? Spend a couple of minutes recalling your discussion from last week.

Wide-load?

Driving on major highways it is not uncommon to come across trucks carrying wide loads. In some cases it is deemed necessary for a car to prepare the way for the truck – with flashing lights and warning signs. Some people require similar preparation – not because of their size, but because of their importance. In humble comparison, John the Baptist is the one who is sent to prepare the way for God to come into our world as a man. We are told;

He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

...John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying 'This was the one I spoke about when I said "He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me" ' (John 1:7-8, 15 NIV)

We are going to have a look at how John the Baptist testified to Jesus, and consider how people responded to what they heard. Our passage is broken into four days, so we will do what we are encouraged to – and take a day at a time.

Day

1

Read John 1:19-28

John the Baptist must have been causing a stir, because the Jews in Jerusalem sent representatives to check him out (1:19). This group was made up of priests, Levites and Pharisees – each with their own particular interests.

1. The priests and Levites want to know who John is. What will they be able to report back?

2. In the light of John's claims the Pharisees want to know by what authority he is baptising. What answer might they take back?

3. John does not give a straight answer to the questions asked of him – but he IS clear in saying that he is *just* the messenger preparing the way for someone much greater. Who does John say he is preparing the way for?

Lord and LORD

Yahweh – the name for God is usually written in capitals – LORD – in our English Old Testaments. Meanwhile – Lord - is reserved for 'ruler' or king. For example David can say "The LORD says to my Lord..."(Psalm 110:1).

In the NT however, we will not see LORD written in capitals, even when quoting the OT. Because the when the NT quotes the OT it does so in Greek, and usually uses the word *kurios*. Our English is translated from the Greek.

Does this matter? Well, yes. For example, in order to know who John the Baptist is preparing the way for (John 1:23), we need to read Isaiah 40:3. So who is he preparing the way for? Is it God, or is it a ruler. **OR is it both?**

Day

2

On Day two Jesus himself arrives on the scene. Apparently John has already baptised Jesus, but (unlike the other gospels) John's Gospel does not record the details.

Read John 1:29-34

4. What does John declare about Jesus, and what Jesus has come to do? (v29, 30, 34)

5. How does John know that he has the right man?

Day

3

Jesus is back the next day and this time we start to see the real fruit of John's preparation for Jesus.

Read John 1:35-42

6. On what basis do Andrew and the unnamed disciple of John 'defect' to Jesus?

7. How long do you think it took before they were completely convinced that Jesus is the Christ?

8. To whom might we attribute the 'conversion' of Peter?

Jesus the Christ

Christ is not Jesus' family name. It's a title. Christ is the Greek for 'anointed one'. The Hebrew equivalent is 'Messiah'. You could roughly translate Christ as 'king'. In the Old Testament the kings were anointed

Any Jew who read their Bible (the Old Testament) would have been looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, God's chosen king who will rule forever.

John is writing his gospel with the purpose of persuading his readers that Jesus is this Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:29-31).

In other words, Jesus is God's chosen king, who will rule forever.

Day

4

On day four Jesus decides it's time to leave for Galilee and so he rounds up his new followers, along with some extras. We can see John 1:12-13 in action, as more people accept that Jesus is the Christ, and become his followers.³

Read John 1:43-51

9. How is Nathaniel (in this instance), similar to Thomas (in John 20:24-31)? What role do signs and evidence play in his 'conversion'?

10. How does this compare with Philip and his response to Jesus?

³ Perhaps Philip is the unnamed person from verse 35. Either way, we do not see the full twelve apostles yet. When the twelve are named – in the other gospels - Nathaniel is not one of them. It is possible that Nathaniel and Bartholomew are one and the same.



Think about it

Now that we've skimmed over these four days – have a look a back over what we have read.

11. Make a note of the names of those who are now followers of Jesus:

12. Now add any thoughts you may have on each of these 'conversions'.

For example How much do these followers of Jesus know about him?

How much are they prepared to give up for him?

13. Now list titles or names that are attributed to Jesus, along with any thoughts you have on each.

At this point you could say that John (the Baptist) has completed his task. He has humbly prepared the way for God to come into this world, and he has testified that Jesus **is** the Son of God.

John's disciples have begun to turn to Jesus. And with their conversion the task of proclaiming Jesus has passed to the next 'generation' of followers. So we see Andrew and Philip spreading the word. The circumstances surrounding each 'conversion' are different, but their conviction is the same – Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

We do not have the same commission as John. But, **like Philip and Andrew, we too ought to be witnesses to the light!**

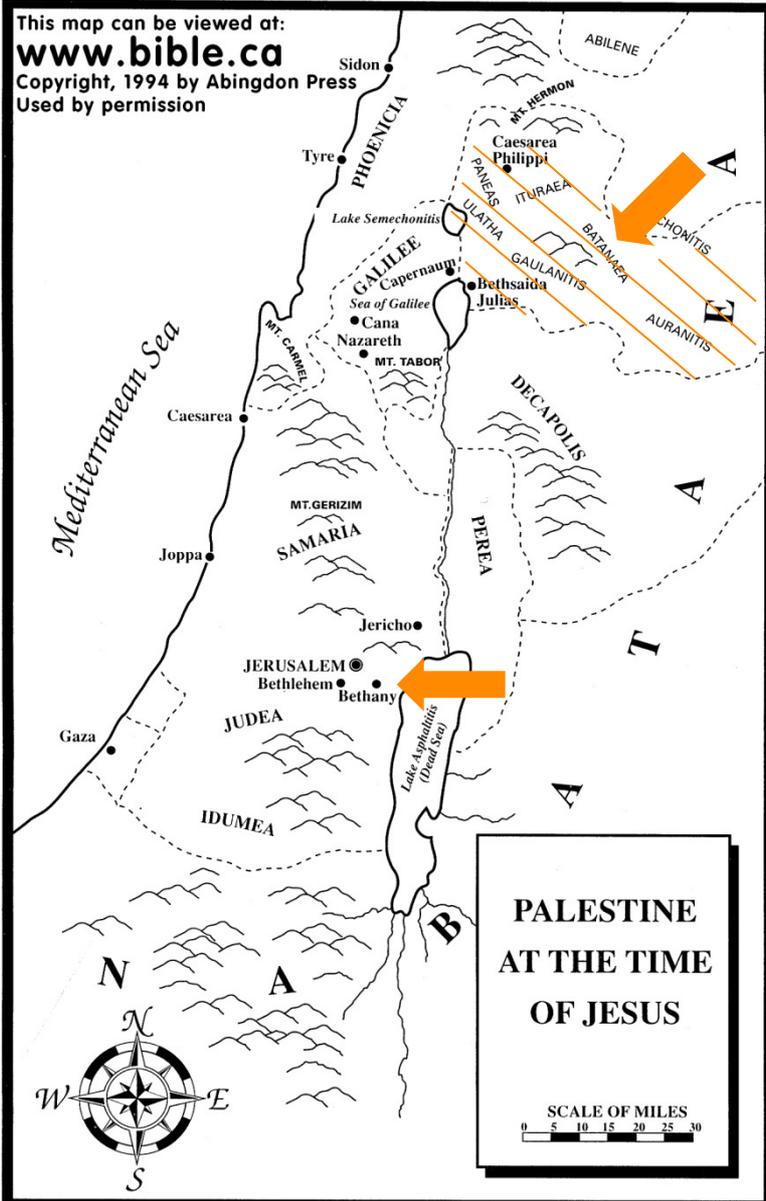


Some things to pray about...

- Pray about our own efforts to testify to Jesus amongst our friends and family.

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Where did John Baptise?

We are told John was baptising at “Bethany on the other side of the Jordan” (John 1:28). However there is no such 'Bethany' marked on early maps. There is a second Bethany, near Jerusalem, and it is well-known (e.g. John 11:18). So, what's going on here?

There is a good argument to say that John the Baptist was in a region called Batanaea, east of the Jordan river, in the north. If that is the case then has John (the gospel writer) 'deliberately' fudged the spelling for a reason?

The way it is, the first half of John's Gospel starts and finishes in a Bethany, at different ends of Israel. The use of the same name – Bethany - pulls the ends together for us. You could say Jesus' 'ministry' started and finishing in Bethany, before he entered Jerusalem for the last time.

There is another neat connection. In John 10:40-42 (just before the events in the southern Bethany) we are told that Jesus' life was threatened, and so he retreated to the place where John had been baptising. As a reader this makes us recall what we have already read about John the Baptist. That he prepared the way for Jesus, and that he declared Jesus to be - “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Then in the following verses (11:1ff), in Bethany, we are given a picture what it means for Jesus to be 'the lamb of God'. For example Jesus raises Lazarus to life again, like a fore-taste of what will happen to Jesus himself. And Jesus is 'anointed' by Mary, in Bethany – anticipating him coming to rule.

Has John written Betanea as Bethany for reasons of 'style' - perhaps to help us make some connections and appreciate the scope of what Jesus is doing. Or are we just reading too much into it? *(Compare Carson p147)

LIGHT SHINING IN DARKNESS

John 3:1-36

Recap on Study one: Why has John written this gospel?

Recap on last week: How are we witnessing to the light?

²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. ²⁵ He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was each person.

John 2:24-25 (NIV)

Jesus knows what is on our mind and in our heart. He knows the difference between claiming to have faith, and having life-changing faith. It is with this in the back of our minds at the end of chapter two that we now turn to the next chapter and read about a man called Nicodemus.



Read John 3:1-8

1. Who is Nicodemus? And why do you think he came to Jesus at night, was he just a busy in the day?
2. Is verse two a statement or a question do you think? What does Nicodemus want to know or to confirm?

Jesus' response to Nicodemus (v3) indicates that Nicodemus does not understand the kingdom of God – nor the entry requirements.

3. What requirement must be met in order to enter the kingdom of God? (v3 and v5)
4. Read Ezekiel 36:25-27. Discuss the similarities between this passage and Jesus' description of what it means to be born again?

Born of water and the Spirit?

Many would argue that John 3:5 is talking about baptism – baptism with water and baptism by the Spirit. The implication made is that it is necessary to be baptised by water and by the Spirit in order to be a Christian. However, that does not stand up in the context. There are at least two things to be aware of.

Firstly, 'Spirit' could equally be 'spirit'. That is *spiritual* rather than God the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, v5 ought to be read in parallel with v6. So the spiritual birth of v6 involves water and spirit in v5. This is the same kind of language as we see in Ezekiel 36:25-27 – sprinkled with water and given a new spirit.

Read in it's context John 2:5 is not talking about baptism. It is saying that it is not possible to enter God's kingdom unless God changes you deep inside! You can not say that much more strongly than to say you need to be born again.

The change that is required for someone to be a part of God's Kingdom is HUGE. In fact, to the non-Christian it cannot be understood – that's what John 3:8 seems to be saying.



Think about it

5. How does 'new-birth' mark us out from the world around us?

Nicodemus is not following Jesus' line of thought – and the risk with these next few verses (v11-12 in particular), is we may not either! So let's set the scene a little, before we read on.

One way to make sense of 3:11-12 is to draw the distinction between the kingdom of God *that is to come*, and re-birth that happens *now*. So, in John 3:3, Jesus is saying no-one can be a part of God's Kingdom *which is to come*, unless they are born again *now*. To put it another way - Jesus is talking about *earthly* things (rebirth), and anticipating *heavenly* things (the Kingdom of God).



Read John 3:9-15

6. Nicodemus started his conversation by referring to Jesus as a teacher who has come from God (John 3:2). How far short of the mark is Nicodemus' assessment of Jesus?

* Note: the incident with Moses and the snake is recorded in Num.21:8-9.



Think about it

7. Nicodemus drastically under-estimated who Jesus is. How might we be at risk of doing the same?

Jesus the Son of Man

The Son of Man is one of the titles used to refer to Jesus. It's a title that calls to mind a vision that Daniel had.

Digging into Daniel 7 reveals that Daniel had a dream in which he saw one who looked like a son of man – in contrast to the beasts he had also seen. This son of man approached God and was given authority and a dominion that would never pass away. He was basically given God's Kingdom. This is in contrast to the feeble kings of Daniel's day – fleeting and not sovereign.

Jesus is the one who fulfils all that Daniel hoped for. By calling Jesus the Son of Man, that fact is being underlined for us.

In the next section Jesus continues to speak in 'third person' as he explains he is the only way to God.



Read John 3:16-21

8. Does God condemn people, or love them? (discuss)

9. What does the passage say keeps people from turning to Jesus?

10. How much do our deeds reveal about us?



Think about it

11. Does Jesus condemn Nicodemus, or love him?

12. What should our attitude be towards those who 'love darkness'?

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night (v2). The truth is that he did not realise how dark *his* night was! John does not tell us if, or how, Nicodemus responded to this conversation with Jesus. When he next appears (John 7:50) he speaks in Jesus' favour. And then (John 19:39) he helps Joseph collect Jesus' body and prepare it for burial. Perhaps Nicodemus *did* see the light?

However, rather than worry about Nicodemus, we ought to be concerned with where we are at and perhaps that is why John chooses not to tell us more about Nicodemus – he wants us to think about our own response. Remember we started with John 2:24-25 - Jesus knows our mind and our heart.

13. Are we ourselves showing true signs of re-birth?

We are not going to cover the rest of John Chapter 3 in any detail. However, for the sake of completion, read it and if you have time discuss this question.



Read John 3:22-36

14. How does John's testimony about Jesus compare with Jesus' own?

(John 3:36 especially)



Some things to pray about...

CAN'T YOU SEE...

John 5:1-47

Recap so far...

Week 1:

Week 2:

Week 3:

In John Chapter 1:11 we read "He came to that which was his own but his own did not recognise him" and that is what we see happening in chapter 4 as Jesus' own countrymen fail to recognise who he is. Now, in Chapters 5 to 10 we see growing antagonism towards Jesus and an escalating battle of words.



Read John 5:1-16

1. What things strike you as odd in this passage?
(Don't get bogged down talking about the 'odd' bits. Simply note them down. We will come back to some of it)

2. What impact does this miracle have on Jesus?

When we fabricate a lie or tell a 'tall story' we tend to smooth things over and iron them out. This account of the healing of an invalid does not have that feel to it at all. Instead, John's attention to detail gives it authenticity (e.g. The name of the pool and the description of the colonnades). John also includes details which do not appear to be central to what he is saying (e.g. perhaps verse 14), though when we reflect back, you may decide it is all there for a reason. **At this stage the main reason we are being told about this miracle is because it triggered a reaction against Jesus.**



Read John 5:16-30

3. Why do the Jews want to kill Jesus? (v18)

4. How does Jesus respond to the antagonism from the Jews? (v19ff)

5. How much does Jesus say the Father has entrusted to the Son?

6. What are verses 25-30 talking about?

7. From our perspective, who is more important – the Father or the Son? Discuss.

8. Who are we (and the Jews in this passage) answerable to – the Son or the Father?

The Jews want Jesus dead because they think he is making himself equal with God. So Jesus takes time to explain how his relationship with God the Father really works. At one level the Son can do nothing on his own (v19 and v30). And yet he can do everything the Father can do. The way we respond to and treat Jesus matches how we will spend all eternity, because God the Father has entrusted Jesus with authority to judge (v22, v27).

Jesus has more to say.



Read John 5:31-47

9. Jesus points out that he does not speak on his own. How do the following support Jesus' testimony
 - John

 - miracles

 - the Father

 - Scripture

 - Moses

10. How is Moses the accuser of these people?

These Jews who are persecuting Jesus really have no idea what they are doing. The irony is that they are accusing Jesus of claiming to be God – when by their actions they are putting themselves in the place of God (e.g. v18). But the thing that really stands out – is just how much they have miss-judged who Jesus is. In fact, if they truly were Jewish, they would recognise Jesus as the one Moses wrote about!



Think about it

11. We can easily see the error in the way the Jews treated Jesus – because it is spelt out for us. Now come back to the man John leaves us to think about for ourselves. Come back to the man Jesus healed (and to some of the 'odd' bits you noted in the passage). **How appropriate is *this man's* response to Jesus?**

12. In what ways can our 'familiarity' with Jesus cause **us** to miss who he really is?

The invalid received so much from Jesus. He received his life back. And yet he failed to recognise who Jesus was. Not only did he fail to see that Jesus is the son of God... he couldn't even point Jesus out in a crowd!! Let's pray that we would recognise Jesus for who he is, and let's pray that we would show our appreciation by pointing others to Jesus too.



Some things to pray about...

TRUTH THAT DIVIDES

John 7:1-53

Recap so far...

Week 1:

Week 2:

Week 3:

Week 4:

In Chapter 6 we see the truth about Jesus is not easy to swallow. Chapter 7 opens with Jesus' own family misunderstanding him. With misunderstanding comes division.



Read John 7:1-13

1. Why do Jesus' brothers think he should go to Jerusalem?
2. What do they fail to understand about Jesus (e.g. v6, 7)
3. In the end Jesus goes – is he following his brothers' advice? (compare v30 and 13:1)

Notice that the truth about Jesus divides his own family. John lets us know others are also divided in their opinion on Jesus (7:11-13, 43). However, there is a general fear of speaking out – presumably because the Jewish authorities have indicated their dislike of Jesus.



Read John 7:14-24

4. Who is trying to kill Jesus? (last week John 5:16-18)
5. What miracle is Jesus referring to?
6. Jesus says these people are judging by appearances – what does he mean? And how are they doing it?



Read John 7:25-52

The next section seems to focus on the division caused by the truth about Jesus (7:43). Let's have a go at getting our heads around the two sides by completing this table. You may like to do it together, or in two groups, one for each side.

Reasons people think Jesus IS the Christ/Messiah	Reasons people think Jesus is NOT the Christ or 'the prophet'

7. Are these people still judging by appearances?

8. Looking back over the passage – the chief priests and Pharisees sent the temple guards to arrest Jesus (v32), but they return empty handed (v45). What is it that made their simple task complicated?



Think about it

9. A common thread that runs through this chapter is the way Jesus divides people – even his own family. Discuss how Jesus still divides people today?

10. How lasting is the division Jesus causes?

11. Should we attempt to minimise the division caused by the truth about Jesus?

12. Another refrain is the idea that Jesus can't be the Christ because he is known, he is a local, he is from Galilee. Is there a common reason why people reject Jesus now?



Some things to pray about...

John 7:53-8:11 – does it fit?

Many English bibles include these verses, but put them under a heading which says that they are NOT in the most reliable manuscripts. So should we treat them as part of John's gospel?

Most probably not. While this event may well have happened, it does not fit well with the flow of John's Gospel.

If the NIV compilers editors were consistent they would put all this section in as a footnote, as they do other textual variants.

This does raise the question of how reliable the Bible really is. However, the fact that we are told that section is not in the most reliable manuscripts ought to indicate that there is a high level of integrity in the way the bible has been preserved. There is no attempt to 'hide' anything.

I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW...

John 9:1-41

Recap so far...

Week 1:

Week 2:

Week 3:

Week 4:

Week 5:

If you shine a bright light in a dark place you might see things more clearly. However if you have become accustomed to the darkness, you may be blinded by the light. We see both these reactions in John Chapter 9 as we watch Jesus – the light – shine in darkness.

In order to feel the way this chapter works we will cover the whole lot fairly quickly. Once we have the overview, we will come back to look at some details in extreme slow motion.



Read John 9:1-12

1. Is there a connection between sin and blindness?
2. How much does this man know about Jesus?

Did you notice some similarities with the healing of the paralytic in Chapter 5? There is another similarity in the following verses – the opposition to Jesus, because he helped a man on the Sabbath.



Read John 9:13-34

(these questions are quick comprehension in order to get a feel for the whole)

3. Why might Jesus be accused of being a sinner?
4. What signs are there that Jesus is not a sinner?
5. Can the man's parents see who Jesus is?
6. Is this man being rude, truthful, or both?



Read John 9:35-41

7. How does the ex-blind man demonstrate his clear vision?

8. Are the Pharisees of verse 40 blind or not?



Looking back over the passage

The ex-blind man is now willing to believe and trust Jesus, meanwhile the Pharisees are now worse than blind. It's as if they have traded places. Let's have another look in extreme slow motion. Look back over the chapter and complete the following table.

What does the 'blind man' know about Jesus	Meanwhile how do the Pharisees respond to Jesus?
9:11	9:16
9:17	9:24
9:31	9:28-29
9:33	9:34 (also 9:22)
9:36-38	9:40-41

9. Is there a connection between sin and blindness? (compare with your answer in Question 1)

You could say that 9:3 tells us exactly what is happening in this chapter – that the blind-man is being used as a visual demonstration of the way God works to bring spiritual sight to the spiritually blind. We are watching Jesus' words from John 8:12 in action – remember;

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

However, this chapter is not all positive;

10. How well does John 9:39 summarise this chapter?



Think about it

7. In what ways can our own sinfulness blind us to the truth about Jesus?

8. How clearly are we seeing?



Some things to pray about...

IT IS BETTER FOR ONE MAN TO DIE

John 11-12⁴

Recap so far...

Week 1:

Week 2:

Week 3:

Week 4:

Week 5:

Week 6:



Memory test

1. What is the structure of John's Gospel (from week 1)?
2. Raising Lazarus to life is the seventh miracle John chooses to record (before Jesus' death and resurrection). Can you list all seven, giving references, and geographical locations?
 - John 2
 - John 4
 - John 5
 - John 6
 - John 6
 - John 9
 - John 11 Lazarus brought back to life – in Bethany (2 Miles from Jerusalem)

In John 11-12 Jesus' public ministry⁵ is drawing to a close. John signals this to us by bringing his narrative back to where he started - to where John had been baptising (John 10:40). Then, in chapter eleven, Jesus comes back to the vicinity of Jerusalem for the last time as we see everything coming to a climax.

There are **three** significant things that happen in chapters 11-12 which point ahead to Jesus' death and resurrection, and underline for us that Jesus is the long awaited King of Israel. **Firstly**, Jesus performs his most amazing miracle yet – bringing a man back to life (11:1-44). This miracle is like a

⁴ Note: This is our last study in John 1-12, so we will be re-capping at a number of points. Don't panic if we do not actually cover chapters 11-12 in detail.

⁵ For want of a better way to describe Jesus activity of preaching and healing etc.

taste of what will happen to Jesus himself. **Secondly**, Mary anoints Jesus with oil (12:1-11). Kings were anointed with oil. **Thirdly**, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey with crowds of people proclaiming him - king of Israel (12:12-19).

While these things point to who Jesus is and what he has come to do, at the same time they incite such strong opposition from the Jewish leaders, that Jesus' death becomes a certainty.

We are not going to read the whole passage. Instead we will focus on three short sections.



Read John 11:44-57

3. In what way is Jesus considered to be a threat to the wellbeing of the nation of Israel?
4. Why does the High Priest want Jesus killed?
5. Where should Jesus stay away from, if he is to preserve his life?

Caiaphas' opening words (v49) could not be more ironic: "you know nothing at all!" His solution to the 'problem' of Jesus, is that Jesus should die for their nation. John tells us that Caiaphas' words are prophetic – Jesus *will* die for Israel and for the scattered children of God too. Out of his complete ignorance Caiaphas' words speak more truth than he could ever know!



Memory test

6. Why does John say he wrote his gospel? (Give chapter/verse)



Think about it

7. How persuasive is John's argument (Q6), given that many of the people who saw Jesus' miracles 'live and unplugged' didn't believe him?

EXTRA – if you have time



Read John 12:20-36

1. How might the voice from heaven have been for the people's benefit?
2. Are people listening?



Read John 12:37-43

John has recorded Jesus' miracles in order that we might believe (John 20). However, actually seeing the miracles first-hand has not helped these people. This massive vote of no-confidence in Jesus raises real questions. So perhaps that's why John includes these verses here?

8. Why do so many of these people fail to believe in Jesus?

9. What about the leaders who believed – why did they fail to intervene?



Memory test

10. Where do you think Nicodemus sits in all this?



Read John 12:44-50

John leaves the 'final' word in this section to Jesus.

11. How do Jesus' words summarise all that we have seen so far in John's gospel?

12. What challenge are we left with at the mid-point of John's gospel?



Reflect

13. What are some things you have noticed or been challenged by on our way through the first half of John's gospel?



Some things to pray about...