

Week 1: John 1-2 (overview of John)

What do we know about John, the author of this book?

John was one of the disciples of Jesus. He and his brother, James, another disciple of Jesus, are referred to as the sons of thunder. John refers to himself throughout the book as "the disciple Jesus loved." We can see this throughout interactions with Jesus - lounging beside him at the Last Supper, being tasked by Jesus to take care of His mother, Mary, after His death (John 19:26), etc. John also wrote John 1, 2, 3, and Revelation, which makes him one of the most prolific writers of the bible. Moses and Paul are the other two, if you're wondering.

Why do you think John starts the Gospel like this? What does it say about what John's intent in writing this book?

John opens the book with the most ultimate things he can say about Jesus. It's almost as though he grabs a microphone, takes a breath, and opens his speech with the deepest, most important thing he knows in the universe. He and the other disciples missed the complete view of who Jesus was for 3 years. John doesn't want us to have to wait to find out the truth of who Christ is - he wants us to know from the moment we begin that Jesus is God. It shows us that above all else, John desires that we would come to know Jesus as God through his book.

John's purpose in writing this Gospel is found in John 20:30-31. If his purpose is to bring people to faith, why should people who are already Christians study it as well?

John's entire purpose of writing this Gospel account is to bring people to faith in Jesus as God so that they may be saved and receive eternal life in Him. It would seem at the surface that the Gospel of John is therefore intended for unbelievers. But is this the whole story?

If you have friends who don't believe but are searching for answers, the book of John is a perfect place to start. It's a clear and focused account of who Jesus is, not just a biography about his life and ministry. John is concerned with the nature of the Son of God and how people can receive eternal life through belief. But John is for the believer, too!

The word believe comes up nearly 100 times throughout the Gospel. John is using an active verb for believe here. He's not saying that people should believe at some point and then check that off their list, but that we are to ALWAYS believe that Jesus is God and through him we find eternal salvation (John 15:6). This book is not about becoming someone who believed, but becoming someone who constantly believes (John 8:31). Therefore, this Gospel is equally important to unbelievers and Christians alike. Our prayer is that through this study, everyone will be called into a deeper love for Christ and seek to take their next step towards Him.

Jesus did not come into being, he just was. Is this idea a new concept for you? For both new believers and life long Christians, how does this truth impact your thoughts on Jesus?

Personal Reflection.

What do you hope will happen to your faith as a result of studying the Gospel of John?

Week 2: John 1:1-5

What do we learn about the nature of God in the first five verses of John? What do we learn specifically about Jesus?

First and foremost, we see that God is outside of time and space. God was in the beginning before anything was created. We also see the theological concept of the trinity being introduced in the very beginning of the book. The trinity is a foundational concept of the Christian faith. Though it is beautiful and of the utmost importance, entire volumes have been written trying to explain how the trinity looks and works. Instead of rehashing it out here, I'll encourage you to turn in your sermon series guide to the article about the trinity.

It's important to note that John is showing us that Jesus is not created, but the creator. He and the Father are one God. Coequal and coeternal, but they are separate persons - distinct from one another, but still remaining the same God.

People often think of the Son as the redeemer, and the Father as the creator. Perhaps that was what you thought before this study. How does the imagery of Jesus as the creator change the way you look at Genesis 1?

Personal reflection.

In what way is Jesus the light in your life? What does that mean?

He provides guidance and direction. He lights the path that we are to walk, and dispels the darkness so that we are able to see the truth of who he is, what he came to do, and how we are saved.

We know from experience that light reveals the truth of what's really there. Have you ever walked into a dark room thinking everything was as it should be, only to find out after flipping on the light switch that it wasn't? Any parent whose kids play with Legos knows what I'm talking about. Had the light been on when you got up to use the restroom, you could have seen that death trap and avoided it. In the same way, Jesus sheds light on our lives. He reveals the death traps all around us that we would have never noticed had we not been looking through a Christ focused lens. He even reveals the death traps of sin inside us. Through Him, we see life as it truly is, and through Him we are saved from the darkness.

If you could ask John one question at this point, what would the question be? Discuss with your Grace Community.

Personal reflection.

Week 3: John 1:6-8

John the Baptist is sent into the world to bear witness to the light - God created him with a purpose. Do you feel you were created with purpose?

Personal Reflection.

Bearing witness about the light is the duty of all believers. It's the main way people come to know Jesus and are given eternal life. Who has God put in your life that you should share the Gospel with? How do you plan to do so?

Personal Reflection.

At this point in the series, what have you felt God saying to you through the Gospel of John? In what ways have you been challenged?

Personal Reflection.

Week 4: John 1:9-13

Take time in your Grace Community to share testimonies of how you became a Christian.

Personal Reflection.

When John says that his own people did not know him, who is he referring to? Why do you think they did not know him?

John is referring to the nation of Israel, the Jewish people, God's chosen people. As we know from the story of Jesus' life and death, not all of the Jewish people of the day believed that he was the Messiah. They did not believe for the same reasons we see to this day - their hearts were hardened and full of sin. Jesus fit the portrait of the Messiah that the prophets painted for hundreds of years, but the Israelites had developed different images in their minds. They were unable to recognize him because they tried to define who their savior was going to be instead of letting God define himself.

How is one saved and reconciled to God? What is required of us? Why do people always seem to think there needs to be more to it?

We are saved by faith alone. The faith that Christ is who he claimed to be - the Son of God, the Messiah, the living God who became sin so that we may become the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21)

What does it mean to become "children of God?" What are the implications of being God's children?

When we accept Jesus as God, our Lord, and savior, we are adopted as sons and daughters of God (Gal 3:26; Eph. 2:19). As sons and daughters of God, we are able to truly see him as a loving father, and not some impersonal cosmic being. This makes us heirs to the throne (Gal 4:7) and therefore we will be glorified with Jesus.

Week 5: John 1:14-18

Why is both glory and grace important to John in these verses? How are these both displayed in Jesus?

First, we should define our terms. Glory can be defined as magnificence. The Jewish readers would have remembered God's glory resting on the tabernacle in Exodus 40:35-37. The greatness and holiness of God was so sweeping that people were not able to enter due to their transgressions. Though His holiness is depicted as a consuming fire, it is right to value and worship his holiness - it is His holiness that makes Him good and unchanging.

Grace is free, unmerited favor. Without God's grace, we would be consumed by His holiness, and God would be right in doing so. But through the unmerited grace of Jesus' sacrifice, we are not damned for eternity; instead, we are God's children. Jesus is both the perfect, holiness of God, and the tender mercy of our loving savior.

In verse 17 we see a comparison of the law and Jesus. What are the differences between the law and what Christ offered? Does Jesus nullify the law?

The bible teaches us that the law reveals to us our sin (Rom 7:7-25). How does it do this? We must remember that the law is the very character and nature of God. It is therefore perfect. We, being under the law, must be perfect to be in relationship with God, but we know from experience and biblical teaching (Ecc 7:20) that nobody is perfectly following the letter of the law by nature and choice.

Jesus on the other hand offers us mercy. Knowing that we cannot fulfill the law on our own accord, he lives a perfect life in our place and dies the death that we deserve for our sins (Rom 6:23). We are then credited His righteousness and can be in relationship with a holy and perfect God.

The law is not nullified through Christ, but rather fulfilled (Matt 5:17). He upheld every law perfectly. We are to uphold the law through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 6:17-19). Only through Christ can we actually follow the law (Rom 14:23).

Can a person with the right doctrine and knowledge of Jesus still be an unbeliever? If so, how or why?

Knowing that Jesus is the Son of God and the only way to heaven is not enough. The bible teaches us that even the devil and his minions know this to be true (Matt 8:28-34). Faith is more than just knowledge that something is true - it's an active trust in his promises and experience of his love.

You may be wondering how these two things are different. Johnathan Edwards describes it the following way in his sermon *Divine and Supernatural Light*, "your mind can know honey is sweet, people can tell you it's sweet, you've read books about it, etc. but if you haven't actually tasted it, you know with your head, but not with your heart. When you actually taste it, you experience it for yourself, you know it in a full way, and you can know it in your heart."

As we wrap up the introduction of the Gospel of John, how has your view of Christ changed? In what way do you hope to grow moving forward?

Personal Reflection.

Take some time in your Grace Community to pray for one another as you continue to take your next steps toward Christ.