

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Week 1: Overview of John

Welcome and Intros:

Leader: Some recommendations for your first gathering and for each subsequent gathering

- Bring nametags and sharpies; have each group member print their first name on a tag and wear it.
- Repeat this for the first four weeks (or the whole time if new members come)
- Introduce yourself, share what drew you to lead this study
- Have members each say their name, a quick overview of who they are, what drew them to this Bible study (have a new leading question each week)
- Pass around a sheet for names, email address, and phone numbers

CONTEXT and CONTENT:

This week will mostly be spent getting a wide overview of the book of John using two introductory videos from the Bible Project. Start by watching this first video (8:45) and then talking through the questions listed below: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/john-1-12/>



Follow-up with some or all of these discussion questions:

- What stood out to you in the video? Anything new/interesting that peaks your interest? What did you notice/wonder as you watched the video?
- What did you learn about who wrote the book? Why it was written? How this gospel is organized or put together? (see list below for summary of these questions)
- Why do you think John starts his gospel with words that clearly echo the Creation story in Genesis (John 1: 1-5)? What is he trying to help his readers to understand?

Now watch the second overview video (8:31) and then talk through the discussion questions that follow: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/john-13-21/>



- What stood out to you in this section of video? Anything new/significant/interesting?
- Any new insights about the author, how the book is organized, why it was written?
- What are a few things that the second half of the book teaches us about discipleship and a life of following Jesus? What does being a disciple actually look like? What stories seem to best embody the life of discipleship?

Here is a summary of some of the major contextual parts of this book (some from the video, some from other sources). Talk over/review as a group whatever seems helpful.

- **WHO** wrote John?
 - Never actually named in the gospel! Identifies himself as the “disciple Jesus loved.”
 - Historically understood as either John the son of Zebedee (1 of the 12 disciples) or John the Elder (a Judean disciple of Jesus who was not part of the 12).

- **WHAT** kind of biblical writing is John?
 - Poetry/hymn (John 1: 1-18), Narrative, eye-witness (rest of John)
- **WHY** did John write?
 - “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20: 31)
 - The word “believe” is used 98 times in the gospel of John- always as a verb! Belief is an action that leads to abundant, embodied, eternal life...
 - Wants his readers to understand Jesus AS God incarnate- “The deeds and works of Jesus are the deeds and works of God.”
- **WHEN** was John written?
 - Usually dated between 70-130 CE
- **HOW** is John structured? 5 parts!
 - Part ONE (John 1): Introduction of Jesus
 - Part TWO (John 2-12): Miraculous signs
 - Part THREE (John 13-17) Night before Jesus trial/final words to disciples
 - Part FOUR (John 18-20): Arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection
 - PART FIVE (John 21): Ongoing mission

APPLICATION:

How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion.

- John could have identified himself as the “disciple who loves Jesus,” but instead identifies himself as, “the disciple Jesus loves.” What does that description tell you about how he understands himself? How he understands God?
 - If you were asked to identify yourself to someone new today, how would you describe yourself? What would it mean for you to identify yourself- first and most importantly- as “one who God loves”? Do you ever think of yourself this way? What makes it hard to live into this identity?
- As you learned in the video, Jesus makes 7 distinct “I Am” statements in the book of John, which include: I Am....the Bread, the Light of the World, the Gate for the Sheep, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection, the Way, Truth, and Life, and the True Vine. Is there one of these descriptors that feels especially important/real/meaningful to you today? Why do you think this description stands out to you?

PRAYER:

Close your time together in prayer using the words from the first chapter of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it....The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. Amen.

