

WEEK 1

SURVEY JOHN'S GOSPEL

In this study we hope to see Jesus anew, afresh with a perspective that only can be supplied by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit through a careful, thoughtful, prayerful study of the Gospel of John.

Take a moment to ask God to guide you by His Spirit into the truth about Jesus as you study this week.

DAY ONE

OUR APPROACH

Often people come to the Bible with their minds made up *or* with a question to which they would like to find an answer. This is a **DEDUCTIVE** approach to reading.

For instance, some come to the Gospel of John as a detective seeking to find out who killed Jesus and why. Other read it looking for the way of salvation, others want to know how women were treated, and still others seek to justify drinking wine at weddings or to arrive at reasons why no one should drink.

There is value in a deductive study, but it is not designed to lead us to understand the Gospel as John and the Holy Spirit intended it to be understood.

To achieve that holy end, we must use an **INDUCTIVE** approach to reading.

We come as readers of John's Gospel to let him tell us what is important to him and the story of Jesus he seeks to communicate.

To do this we will look for his structure, his word choices and frequency of usage, and for his literary style. Through means such as this, John is telling us something about Jesus that is a unique perspective.

The other three Gospels, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, are called *synoptic* because they take the *same view* of Christ's life. Many of the stories they tell are very similar and the structure of their Gospel accounts shows some knowledge and reliance upon one another's works.

The Gospel of John is not that way. It approaches the life of Christ from an entirely different perspective.

“NOW JESUS PERFORMED MANY OTHER MIRACULOUS SIGNS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE DISCIPLES, WHICH ARE NOT RECORDED IN THIS BOOK. BUT THESE ARE RECORDED SO 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 20:30–31, NET)

Have you come to see Jesus this way? Do you understand what it means that He is the Christ, the Son of God? Have you believed in a way that gives YOU life in His name?

DAY TWO

We are going on a journey to discover Jesus. Along the way are inestimable treasures of insight and meaning. Our path through this Gospel is straight-forward, but as you will discover there are many twists and turns, even backtracking that we will have to make to fully understand this most remarkable of people.

Pray asking the Lord to guide you through the forest to a mountain peak from which you can determine John's layout for this life of Christ!

KEEPING THE THREE STEPS SEPARATE

The inductive method is just that, a *method*. In order to see Jesus from John's perspective, we must keep the three separate steps of the inductive method in their right order and perspective in order to keep us from importing our own prejudices into the process of understanding John's view of Jesus.

The first step is **OBSERVATION** in which we ask the question, "*What did John write?*"

In each unit we will begin here, looking for the treasure of truth which is laying all around, sometimes in plain sight. Today and tomorrow, we will ask this question of the structure of the Gospel in survey fashion. This will serve us as a guide to more intense study.

The next step is **INTERPRETATION** where we take our observations and ask, "*What did those who first read this Gospel understand this to mean?*" Note that this is quite different from asking, "What does this say to me?"

Before we can apply what John has said, we must first understand his meaning. Why did John tell things as he did?

What was the purpose of each story? What conclusion did he want those to whom he wrote to draw?

The third step is **APPLICATION** where, based upon what we have discovered about the meaning in the previous two steps, we should seek to answer the question, "*How should we live in light of what is written here?*"

STRUCTURE

Today we will begin to read in survey fashion the Gospel to see something of where we are going in this study. To assist you in recording what you see as you read there is a chart which comes on a separate page with this unit. It lays out twenty-five major parts arranged in two distinctive sections.

The Book of Signs (*Chapters 1-12*)

The Book of Glory (*Chapters 13-20*)

Today read through *The Book of Signs* and write a short one to three word title that tells you what is in each of the eighteen parts. I have given you one example as an illustration.

Don't worry about what you are putting as a caption or headline for each section as long as it helps you summarize what is there. This is your map to help guide further study. One word of caution, *use a pencil with a good eraser*. You may want to make refinements as you go along in *your* study.

DAY THREE

We continue our preparations for the journey by reading through *The Book of Glory* doing the same thing that we did yesterday.

There are only seven sections today, but it covers some powerful truths.

Ask the Lord to guide you through the story of Jesus' love, His death and resurrection, with the Spirit leading you into a discovery of truth.

Before you go on to your assignment, let me point out three important values of studying.

VALUE OF RE-READING

First, is the value of *re-reading*. One cannot underestimate the value of reading a book of the Bible, such as the Gospel of John, over and over and over. Each time you read it, more will stand out to you.

You will “begin to hear the echoes” from one part in another part. The verbal clues that the author has encoded will make themselves known to you as you familiarize yourself with his writings.

Campbell Morgan suggested reading a book through fifty times before beginning to preach from it. This is particularly true of a large writing such as the Gospel of John.

VALUE OF WRITING

One cannot calculate the value of preparing for a discussion with others by writing out your observations, questions, and discoveries as you study.

This study is designed with charts for you to fill out, questions to answer, and an opportunity for summarizing and reflecting.

Writing out your thoughts will help you think through the passage and make your participation in the discussion more meaningful.

VALUE OF DISCUSSION

As valuable as one's own insights into the Gospel will be, they can be multiplied when the Word of God is seen through other's eyes.

Many people have spent years in pursuit of the insights contained in this book. We will not only be reading some of their comments, but we encourage you to look at it through the eyes of your discussion group.

Listen carefully to what others are saying and reflect on what they have seen.

Now finish reading the Gospel of John and writing your summary on the Overview Chart.

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DAY FOUR

Today, we want to think back over the Gospel using our survey chart as we have filled it in.

LITERARY STYLE

As you read, you probably noticed that this Gospel makes use of various literary styles such as an interesting philosophical prologue, dialogue (conversation) between people. *How many times did Jesus engage people in conversation?*

John also serves as narrator telling us accounts of miracles, speeches given, Scripture quoted, and from time to time telling us why Jesus did certain things and not others. *Did you note any humor along the way?*

PERICOPE

As we go through our study we will see various sections such as the first eighteen verses that are called *J1 – Prologue*. These are based upon the work of Dr. Darrel Bock in *Jesus According to Scripture*. They help us to identify significant story units under our twenty-five main sections.

DAY FIVE

In our final study of this first week, we want to think a little more clearly about John's purpose in writing.

How many miraculous signs does John record?

List them:

2:1-11

4:46-54

5:1-9

6:1-15

6:16-21

9:1-7

11:38-44

We recognize that he could have included many more miracles. He was selective in the ones he included. *What does John say is the purpose of the ones selected for inclusion (20:30-31)?*

Look back over the seven miracles in John and ask yourself this question for each of them, *how does this miracle point me to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God?*

BONUS MATERIAL

AUTHOR

Did the Apostle John write the Gospel of John? You will easily note that nowhere in the Gospel does the writer identify himself by name. This is true of all four Gospels.

Our identification of the author comes to us from both a combination of external clues and the traditional identification handed down from early church fathers that it was John.

What do these verses indicate about the identity of the author:

13:23-24 –

18:15-16 –

19:26-27 –

20:2-10 –

21:7 –

21:24 –

Irenaeus, heard a disciple of John, Polycarp, speak and testified in about 175 AD that “John, the disciple of the

Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.”¹

THEMES

Dr. Ed Blum, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, points out that,

When one compares the Gospel of John with the other three Gospels, he is struck by the distinctiveness of John's presentation. John does not include Jesus' genealogy, birth, baptism, temptation, casting out of demons, parables, transfiguration, instituting of the Lord's Supper, His agony in Gethsemane, or His Ascension. John's presentation of Jesus stresses His ministry in Jerusalem, the feasts of the Jewish nation, Jesus' contacts with individuals in private conversations (e.g., chaps. 3–4; 18:28–19:16), and His ministry to His disciples (chaps. 13–17). The major body of the Gospel is contained in a “Book of Signs” (2:1–12:50) which embraces seven miracles or “signs” which proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. This “Book of Signs” also contains great discourses of Jesus which explain and proclaim the significance of the signs. For example, following the feeding of the 5,000 (6:1–15), Jesus revealed Himself as the Bread of Life which the heavenly Father gives for the life of the world (6:25–35). Another notable and exclusive feature of the Fourth Gospel is the series of “I am” statements

¹ Irenaeus of Lyons, “Irenæus Against Heresies,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 414.

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that were made by Jesus (cf. 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5).²

Dr. Irving Jensen in *John: A Self-Study Guide* lists as major subjects the topics on following chart. Keep a running list as you go of verses in John which fit these topics.

<i>Incarnate Son</i>	
<i>Relationship with Father</i>	
<i>Trials</i>	
<i>Crucifixion</i>	
<i>Resurrection</i>	
<i>Way of Salvation</i>	
<i>Eternal Life</i>	
<i>Holy Spirit</i>	

² Edwin A. Blum, "John," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 268.

<i>Miracles as Signs</i>	
<i>Opposition by the Jews</i>	
<i>Training of the Twelve</i>	
<i>Belief vs. Unbelief</i>	
<i>Witnessing</i>	
<i>Christian Love</i>	
<i>Prayer</i>	
<i>Attaining Wisdom</i>	