



**REFRAMING**

**JESUS**

**PORTRAITS OF GLORY FROM JOHN'S GOSPEL**

**DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE**



# **REFRAMING JESUS**

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<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written 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**

## ABOUT | Seattle Area Pastors Network

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Seattle Area Pastors Network is a group of gospel-centered pastors praying for the day when every man, woman and child in the Seattle Area will have a daily encounter with Jesus in word and deed.

This group was started in 2015 by Pastors Paul Dean and Rich McCaskill who have been doing gospel work on the Eastside for the last decade. Still concentrated in the Seattle Area, it now includes dozens of pastors leading churches across the Puget Sound and Western Washington from Grays Harbor to Mount Vernon.

We gather four times a year for prayer, learning, and building each other up. Each year we take the opportunity to learn key peaching themes in a book of the Bible from a world class seminary professor during a one day intensive. We follow up with crafting a robust sermon series from this book, selecting key commentaries/books for pastoral study, drafting rough sermon outlines/text breakdowns, and developing this discipleship guide for individual/small group study.

This resource is a collaborative effort of over a dozen pastors in our network. As such it contains the unique styles, formats and voices from pastors with a variety of backgrounds and contexts. Our hope is this guide will help pastors, leaders, groups, and individuals grow as disciples of Jesus who make disciples as they spend significant time with Jesus as He is revealed in John's Gospel. In preaching this book together, we seek to foster greater unity around the Gospel of Jesus for the Glory of Jesus.

Special thanks to **Tim Mackie** from **The Bible Project** and **Western Seminary** for serving our network by training pastors on John's Gospel.

For more info visit: [seattlepastors.org](http://seattlepastors.org)

# INTRO | UNIQUE GOSPEL – UNIQUE JESUS

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The deeper you get into the Gospel of John, the more you realize just how unique it is, especially compared with the other gospels. Likely written last, John offers a perspective on Jesus that is at times quite different from Matthew, Mark, or Luke. While it is commonly accepted that John's gospel is the most personal and relational perspective on Jesus, it is the absence of certain things that make John truly stand out. In John, there are no demons or conflicts with evil spirits. The gospel of John never uses the word "repent" and only uses the phrase "Kingdom of God" during Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. There is hardly any mention of the return of Christ (it shows up in John 5:28 & 21:22), and there are, strictly speaking, no parables. All of these differences, with the synoptic gospels, have often led critical scholars to doubt the veracity of the book of John. However, when properly understood, the gospel of John brings a perspective on the life and ministry of Jesus that not only aligns with the other gospels, but enhances and enriches them.

In the opening verses, John begins preparing his readers for the themes and dualities that will build and shape this book: light vs. dark, life vs. death, grace and truth, the humanity and divinity of Jesus, and acceptance vs. rejection of his claims. Much could be said here about each of these themes, but that is the purpose of this lengthy study of John's gospel. You will have time to look at each of these themes in depth, and consider them in relation to Jesus.

As you embark on a journey through this gospel, however, there is one tip that I would like to share with you. In the latest portions of his gospel, John makes his intentions crystal clear:

*"[I have written this] 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

Keep this purpose statement in mind as you read through the book. John wants you to believe in Jesus and receive life from him. This over-arching goal will help you as you seek to understand why John wrote certain stories the way that he did.

May God use your time in the Gospel of John to draw you closer to God, and to empower you to help others come to know the eternal life that is found in Jesus, the eternal Logos. **-Aaron Gray Shoreline, WA**



# SERMON SERIES | REFRAMING JESUS

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By Christopher Rich – Marysville, WA

Everyone, knowingly or not, has painted a portrait of Jesus in their mind. Some of these portraits are clear and robust with knowledge and details that can only come from spending significant time with the subject. Christians can easily have these portraits distorted by *legalistic tradition* crafting an image of God's Son as harsh and unrelatable, *liberal license* showing a wise teacher who cared for the poor and marginalized but never addressed sin or called for repentance and obedience, or *ignorance* making a portrait vague or less than fully accurate. Even those who are opposed or indifferent to Jesus have painted portraits worthy of only mockery or that are too small to have an impact on their lives.

In ***Reframing Jesus***, we do not desire to reinvent Jesus into someone He is not or make Jesus into an image we are more comfortable with. Instead, we seek to have our portrait of Jesus reframed by the Word of God in John's Gospel to see Him as accurately and glorious as possible.

John breaks out into four broad portraits with the following themes:

***Portraits of Truth (John 1)*** – Jesus is the very Word (logos) of God that shows and speaks what is true about the world, us, and God.

***Portraits of Life (John 2-12)*** – Life comes from God so true life can only be experienced with God. Jesus is God in the flesh dwelling with His people and engaging with them to bring abundant life in the heights of a wedding feast, to the depths of being caught and condemned in adultery.

***Portraits of Glory (John 13-17)*** – Finite fallen humanity cannot behold the glory of an infinite and perfect God. God knows this, so He condescends to us revealing His glory through the person and work of Jesus. To see Jesus clearly is to see God's Glory as He has chosen to reveal it to us.

***Portraits of Love*** (John 18-21)- God's love for His people is displayed most clearly in the death of Jesus on the cross, in our place, for our sin and His resurrection shows us His love is powerful enough to overcome death and provide glorious life with God now and forever.

The broad goals for this series are the same for every series; that we would have the target of our affections, hope, and worship moved from the things of this world to the Creator of this world who reveals Himself through the scripture and most clearly in the person and work of His Son Jesus Christ. Additionally, as disciples of Jesus who are called to go into the world to make more disciples, we seek to faithfully engage with a world opposed to the God of the Bible. We do this by knowing the nature and character of our God through searching the depths of His word, praying it would sink deep into our hearts and flow out in our lives.

Lastly, we know when people hear, see, and experience the portrait of Jesus displayed in the Bible it radically changes the lives and missions of individuals. As such this series is also explicitly *evangelistic*. Our hope is those who do not know ***God's truth, life, glory, and love shown in Jesus Christ*** would hear the Gospel, reflect on their own lives and respond to the offer of life with God in Christ leading to a lifelong reorientation from trusting themselves to simply ***Trust Jesus now*** and into eternity.

# **DISCUSSION – STUDY GUIDES**



**PORTRAITS  
OF  
TRUTH  
JOHN 1**

# PART 1 | REFRAMING THE BEGINNING

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By Aaron Gray – Shoreline, WA

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.— John 1:1*

*“There is something in us, as storytellers and as listeners to stories, that demands the redemptive act, that demands that what falls at least be offered the chance to be restored.” — Flannery O’Connor*

## John 1:1-5, 9-14 – Portrait of the glorious WORD

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One of the longest-running conflicts throughout human history is the conflict between the philosopher and the poet. The philosopher uses the intellect, logic, and reason to come to an understanding about the universe. They don’t care about mere opinions, they want truth! The poet, by contrast, tells stories, sings songs, and searches the stars. They contend that there are some things about the universe that we cannot understand if we only use our intellect.

In our day, we frame this conflict as the difference between those who are more driven by the head or the heart. But, in the time of the Hellenistic Greeks, the period of history out of which the gospel of John comes, they used two words to describe these facets of human understanding: mythos and logos. Mythos, as you might be able to guess, refers to story. It does not necessarily mean something untrue, as our modern word myth can convey, but refers to the power of a story to shape us and move us. Logos, by contrast, refers to the ideas or arguments that also have the power to move us. We humans can also be shaped and moved by the teaching, explaining, and defending of ideas.

It is right smack dab in the middle of this conflict that John dramatically opens up his account of the life of Jesus.

Mythos and Logos Together in Jesus The Gospel of John begins with these words: ***“In the beginning was the Word.”*** You don’t need to have a degree in literature to recognize that the first words, “in the beginning,” are a dead giveaway that this is going to be a story. But, John is not simply referencing any old story. No, his Jewish readers would immediately recognize the opening words of the Hebrew Scriptures, the book of Genesis. This is a mythos that will tell us something about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But John doesn’t even finish his first sentence without also engaging with the other side of the conflict, “in the beginning was the Word.” The Greek word that we translate as “the word” is...you guessed it, logos.

The idea of the word has rich meaning for both John’s Jewish and Greek readers. For the Jewish people, this would likely have called to mind passages like Psalm 33:6, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.” This logos is referring to God’s creative power, the same power in Genesis 1 that spoke the world into existence. But John’s Greek readers would also have reacted to these powerful words. Author N.T. Wright helps to explain, “[Greek philosophers] spoke of the ‘word’ as a kind of principle of rationality, lying deep within the whole cosmos and within all human beings. Get in touch with this principle, they said, and your life will find its true meaning. Well, maybe, John is saying to them; but the Word isn’t an abstract principle, it’s a person. And I’m going to introduce you to him.”

In just a few short words, John has managed to bring together the poet, the philosopher, the Jew, and the Greek and prepare all of us for an incredible, life-altering story about a person named Jesus.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. As you embark on this journey through the gospel of John, what is your hope/expectation/prayer for yourself personally? What about for family? Your small group? Your church?
3. Do you identify more with the philosopher or with the poet? How is that a good thing? How can it go wrong? How can you learn and grow from those who are on the other side?
4. "...full of grace and truth." Why can this balance be so hard to find? Which side do you naturally gravitate toward? How is God wanting to grow you in both?
5. Jesus came to give us "grace upon grace." How has the grace of God radically altered your life? How does God want you to share that grace with others?

## NOTES:

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## PART 2 | REFRAMING THE PROPHET

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By Aaron Gray – Shoreline, WA

*<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. - John 1:6-7*

*“If we profess to have any real Christianity, let us strive to be of John the Baptist’s spirit.” — J.C. Ryle*

### John 1:6-8, 15-34

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Who is that strange member of your extended family? Oh don’t pretend, every family has one...or maybe a few! (Having recently attended an extended family reunion, I can say this with confidence.) And, as the saying goes, if you can’t pick out who the strange member of the family is, then here is the reality: it’s probably you.

In Jesus’ family, the strange one would have been John the Baptist. Luke 1:26 tells us that Jesus’ mother Mary and John’s mother Elizabeth were family, possibly cousins. In Mark 1:6 we see just how strange John really was, wearing camel hair and eating locusts dipped in honey. Even in 1st century Israel, this behavior was odd enough to be noteworthy!

This John, the one who baptizes, is different from John, the one who wrote the gospel. I know it’s confusing, as there are many men in the Bible named John. But take heart, it’s not as confusing as trying to sort out all the women named Mary!

For all his strangeness, there are some truly remarkable things about John, things that are worth emulating in our lives. Here are seven things to think about as you study the life of John the Baptist.

**1. John’s life had a divine calling.** In 1:6, John (the author) tells us that John (the Baptist) was “a man sent from God.” This means he was not

simply out there calling people to repentance, or baptizing on his own authority. God's call gave his life purpose and direction.

**2. John stood out in his culture.** His odd choice of clothing had a purpose. By dressing the way that he did, he called to mind the Old Testament prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:7-8). Not only that, but his activity of baptizing was strange, as ceremonial washing was typically reserved only for the priesthood. John did not fall in line with the prevailing culture of his day.

**3. John was fearless.** In 1:19 and 1:24, we see that the Pharisees sent a group to investigate him. These Pharisees were a sect of Jewish leaders wielding not only a tremendous amount of religious power, but political clout as well. When pressed by them, John did not back down, he fully embraced his unique identity Godly calling.

**4. John knew his role.** Even with divine calling and unique purpose, he knew the limitations of his role and calling. John knows where his role ends and Jesus' begins: "he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" (1:33)

**5. John knew his identity.** The Pharisees pressed him hard, but John knew who he was. Instead he embraced his God-given identity. He was a fulfillment of Isaiah 40. He was the voice in the wilderness, crying 'make straight the path for the coming of the Lord.' John's life was most fundamentally defined by his call to point to Jesus.

**6. John was humble.** Again, think about the pride that could have come into John's heart! Crowds of people following him, religious leaders coming to check into his ministry and thinking that he might be the second coming of Elijah! And yet, when asked about his importance, John chose the route of humility: "I am not even worthy to untie his sandal."

**7. John was focused on Jesus above all.** He was laser-focused on pointing people to Jesus. Charles Spurgeon explained John's focus on Jesus well: "If he had been the most eloquent preacher of repentance, if he had been

the most earnest declaimer against the sins of the times, he would, nevertheless, have missed his life-work, if he had forgotten to say, “Behold the Lamb of God.” He did well when he baptized the repenting crowd, he spoke nobly when he faced the Pharisees, and was a true hero when he rebuked Herod, but after all his chief errand was to herald the Messiah, to bear witness to the Son of God.”

John the Baptist truly was a unique figure in redemptive history, but, he also serves as a model for us as followers of Jesus. Did you know that your life has a divine calling and purpose (Romans 1:6)? Your life is supposed to stand out in the middle of your culture (Philippians 2:15) as fearless (Psalm 27:1), knowing your role in Christ’s kingdom (1 Corinthians 12:4-6) basing your identity on Jesus (1 Peter 2:9-10) and pursuing humility before him (1 Peter 5:5). We are called to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah in all that we do and say (2 Cor 4:5).

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. How does knowing that your life has divine calling and purpose help you be fearless? Similarly, how does knowing this help you be humble?
3. Is your life “unusual” or does it look exactly the same as the rest of culture?
4. How does your identity—the deepest sense of who you are—rest on Jesus? How is God seeking to grow you in living out the reality that your identity is truly and fully rooted in him?
5. Where does your life serve to point others to Jesus? How, specifically, might you to grow in this area?

## PART 3 | REFRAMING THE DISCIPLES

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By Aaron Gray – Shoreline, WA

*<sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” - John 1:48*

### John 1:35-51

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Our church elders and staff recently did a personality profile test together as a way to foster self-awareness and grow in our ability to work as a team. I’ve done a number of these, and find them to be helpful in a variety of ways. One of the things about my personality type is that I’m drawn to a variety of hobbies. I’m not the type of person to find one thing and then devote the rest of my life to it, I generally try something until I am functional, and then move on to the next experience.

We all have various things we like to do: cooking, hiking, singing, just to name a few. And if you were to talk about your hobby with someone else, you would say it’s a part of your life. But have you ever known somebody who took one of those activities and truly devoted themselves to it? What a big difference between a person who enjoys jogging, cycling, and swimming and someone who is training for a triathlon. There is a big difference between someone who likes to cook and a person who is opening a restaurant. A hobbyist is very different from a devotee.

One of the things that is unfortunate about the way many people approach their faith is that Jesus gets put into the category of hobby. The Bible, worship, and prayer get treated as a hobby when Jesus asks us to devote our entire life to him. ***Jesus doesn’t invite hobbyists, he calls disciples.***

**Being a Disciple** - The Bible uses a variety of words to identify people who are followers of Jesus: children of God, saints, servants, members of a household, stones being built together into a temple, and others. But in

the narrative books of the New Testament (Matthew—Acts), there is one word that dominates the discussion: disciple. In fact, the word disciple *only* appears in the narrative books. It is an active word, a word that means a learner or a follower, one who has linked themselves to a leader and follows them through life's journey. In John 1:35-51, we see Jesus calling his first disciples. And it is in this story that we see some of the most important markers of what it means to be a disciple.

## Markers of a Disciple

1. **Become a disciple.** Before anything else can happen in the journey of discipleship, a person must first meet Jesus. In this story, John the Baptist has a critical role of pointing people's attention to Jesus and telling them to follow him. In fact, John is so insistent on people following Jesus that he tells *his own disciples* to pack up shop and follow Jesus! Five different men meet Jesus in these verses: Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathaniel, and an unnamed disciple, who many scholars believe is John, the author of this gospel account. But let us not miss the point, there is a moment of decision where every disciple must come to a firm understanding that they are going to follow, serve, and learn from Jesus. There must be a point of conversion.
2. **Grow as a disciple.** One of the more interesting things that happens in this story is that Jesus tells Simon that his name will now be Peter, which means "rock." This is significant, as it is more than just a simple nickname. In the Bible, when people have their name changed, it indicates a change of identity and purpose in life. God changes us as we encounter him! By changing Simon's name to Peter, Jesus is telling Peter that he is going to grow, change, and mature into someone who is strong and reliable. As Charles Spurgeon notes about this element of the story, "Christ changes men's names, and changes their natures, too. He can make the most fickle of us to become firm and steadfast." A disciple doesn't only meet Jesus, he is grown and changed by Jesus.

3. **Make more disciples.** One of my favorite aspects of this story is how the various disciples go and tell others about Jesus. First, Andrew goes and finds his brother Simon and brings him to Jesus. Then, Philip goes to tell his friend Nathaniel, but Nathaniel isn't immediately convinced. In fact, Philip has to persevere in sharing about Jesus even through Nathaniel's negativity and pushback. This is important for every disciple to understand as soon as possible in their discipleship journey: following Jesus will not always be easy. When we share him with others, even when they push against us, we have an opportunity to grow as disciples and to become more like him.

Following Jesus is hard, but worth it. If we really believe that he is God's means of rescue and redemption, then how could we *not* want to attach ourselves to him? I like what pastor Ray Ortlund said about following Jesus:

*"We're not saying Jesus is one good way among others. We're not even saying he's the best way among others. We're saying he's the only way."*

If this is the case, then let us move away from treating Jesus like one of our hobbies and into a full-hearted, committed, lifestyle of discipleship.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. **Be a disciple:** where are you tempted to make following Jesus a hobby instead of whole-life discipleship? Who has God placed in your life that can help you grow?
3. Invite a new disciple: Philip said "come and see" to a skeptical Nathaniel. Who do you need to say this to?
4. **Grow a disciple:** Who has God placed in your life that you can disciple? What intentional steps do you need to take to make this a reality?







# **PORTRAITS OF LIFE**

**JOHN 2-12**

## NOTE | BOOK OF THE SIGNS

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Chapters 2-12 in John has often been referred to as the “Book of Signs” as many miracles are performed by Jesus for the purpose of revealing signs about Jesus identity, nature and character.

As we walk through this section consider the following characteristics found in each sign performed by Jesus:

1. Each of these signs tell us something about Jesus and his Kingdom.
2. Each of these signs are misunderstood by some, and lead to increasing controversy. This controversy will eventually lead to Jesus’s death.
3. Each of these signs force us to answer the question – “Who is Jesus.”

## PART 4 | REFRAMING LIFE

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By Dave Parker - Kirkland, WA

*“Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”<sup>11</sup> This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. - John 2:10-11*

*“He who made the wine at this wedding does the same thing every year in the vines. As the water which the servants put into the water-pots was turned into wine by the Lord, so that which the clouds pour down is turned into wine by the same Lord.” – St. Augustine*

### John 2:1-12

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I was talking with a Seahawk player in the early 90's who was part of our church. I once asked him who impressed him most at the stadium during the games. Without hesitation he said the “Peanut Guy”. He noted that week after week this certain guy threw peanuts better than anyone, always treated people respectfully and did his job with passion and humility. It's amazing the impact that the faithful person that serves outside of the limelight can make on the person who is constantly in the limelight. Jesus knew that sometimes he would be more effective if he quietly served behind the scenes. John 2 starts with one of those encounters.

Jesus, early in the book of John and in his first recorded miracle, is already being portrayed as the one who is to restore. Restore Israel, restore lives, restore brokenness, restore the shamed...As common water is transformed into amazing wine, so Jesus does the same for those who believe in Him. This is the first of seven “signs” in John that point people directly to Jesus (John 20:30-31) as the way to eternal life and to the “full” or “abundant life” on earth (John 10:10).

### Note 3 Areas of Kingdom Significance:

**1. The Water Jars for Purification:** Mark 7:1-4 shows us the water in the jars was used to wash (purify) hands and feet on the way into the banquet and the hands before and after dinner. Jesus is starting to show that God is doing a new thing in the middle of the old Jewish system. He is bringing the promised purification to Israel and will ultimately bring purification and newness to all who will accept Him. *The empty jars of Judaism were filled when Jesus came. All that the law could not fulfill were fulfilled in Jesus.*

**2. Transformation of Water to Wine:** Jesus took the most common drink and turned it into a drink representative of a celebration. Jesus didn't stop at 1 jar but rather turned all 6 into wine, certainly, more wine than was needed for the remainder of the wedding. He didn't do things halfway. Jesus doesn't want to just kind of transform us. Jesus won't stop short in your life. Jesus' grace and forgiveness towards those who have run dry by their own works and attempts at self-salvation doesn't stop there, instead it flows abundantly for life and for all who would call upon the name of the Lord.

**3. The Wedding Feast - Greater things are still to come.** What Jesus accomplished at the wedding in Canaan was a foreshadow of the future wedding hour where the church, his bride, is united in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21). Isaiah 25:6-8 is a glimpse of what is yet to come as we all gather at the great banquet of the Lord. A banquet for all people...with the finest of wines. What a banquet that will be! We need to make sure that we aren't so enamored by the engagement that we lose sight of the wedding that is to come.

Jesus chose obscurity over fame as he performed this first miracle in the insignificant village in Galilee. Insignificance never mattered to God and in fact, He seems to thrive off turning the insignificant into something more than we could've asked or imagined. After all, he is the God of miracles. He is the God of abundance.

NT Wright said it well:

*The transformation from water to wine is of course meant by John to signify the effect that Jesus can still have today on people's lives. He came, as he says later, that we might have life in all its fullness (10:10). You might want to pray through this story with your own failures and disappointments in mind—remembering that transformation only came when someone took Mary's words seriously: 'Do whatever he tells you.'*

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. How did Jesus save the Master of the banquet from shame?
3. Read 2:11 How did Jesus reveal his glory in this simple miracle story?
4. Are you in awe of the glory of God? Does God's glory determine how you act in a situation, respond to people, or even see people.
5. How is Jesus illustrating the promised purification of Israel? How about our purification?
6. How has your life been transformed, and the shame been removed by Jesus?
7. How does this transformation occur? What does it look like? **Refer also to Rom 12:1-2**

## PART 5 | REFRAMING PASSION

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By Dave Parker - Kirkland, WA

*<sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” - John 2:17*

*“the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil in the world is for good men to do nothing” - Edmund Burke*

### John 2:13-25

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A friend of mine tended to get rather animated especially in meetings. He'd start to rant about what he thought, would get a little red in the face, raise his voice and get very dramatic and tense with his words. One day, I had finally had enough and looked him in the eye and said, Rick, why are you getting so mad? He stared me down intently, looked me right back in the eyes and said as loud and dramatic as ever, “I’m not mad, I’m passionate!”. Call it zeal or righteous anger, you can be assured that Jesus was very passionate as he was about his father’s business.

When I was a kid, the flannel graph (millennials please google it) was the power point of that day. Let me tell you, this story in John 2:13-25 could ‘preach it’ on the light blue flannel graph board...The whip was flying, tables were tossed over – it was awesome! The realization is that this is more than a compelling story of violence/vengeance played out on flannel graph but rather one of Jesus reframing the meaning of the temple and ultimately the whole Jewish system. Jesus now goes from low profile to high profile; from being in the shadows in the small town of Cana to centerstage in the limelight of Jerusalem.

Read the following quotes to understand the state of the temple and the Jewish religion as Jesus enter Jerusalem:

**NT Wright:** *The Temple was the beating heart of Judaism. It wasn’t just, as it were, a church on a street corner. It was the center of worship and music, of politics and society, of national celebration and mourning. It was*

*also the place where you would find more animals (alive and dead) than anywhere else. But, towering above all these, it was of course the place where Israel's God, YHWH, had promised to live in the midst of his people. It was the focal point of the nation, and of the national way of life.*

**Warren Weirsbe:** *The condition of the temple was a vivid indication of the spiritual condition of the nation. Their religion was a dull routine, presided over by worldly minded men whose main desire was to exercise authority and get rich. Not only had the wine run out at the wedding feast but the glory had departed from the temple.*

There was a lucrative business going on at the temple. Foreign money was exchanged for the proper temple Currency – high rates. In some cases the priests were the ones running these business. Animals for sacrifice were sold at a premium. What started as a convenience escalated into a for-profit market. Complicating things further was that Gentiles could only come into this outer court area and would often come to seek truth or wisdom from the priests but instead they were met with this circus of the marketplace further complicating their access to God.

Convenience had overtaken reverence & Jesus had enough. Jesus was declaring war on the hypocritical leaders and condemning a system that only complicated access to God. He was zealous for his Father's house.

Jesus' mission is consuming him as it should and is bringing new meaning to what their Passover feast and time of sacrifice was all about. He will eventually himself become the sacrificial lamb, the ultimate sacrifice, as foretold by John the Baptist (John 1:29), but for the time being, Jesus stops the sacrificial system in its tracks on one of the busiest days of the year all for the passion he has for the dwelling place of his Father.

Jesus is consumed with passion for his mission, for bringing God's glory back to the temple and for reframing himself as the true Temple where God's glory dwells (see 1:14). He predicts the destruction of his own body on the cross and raised again in the resurrection. His resurrection will

fulfill the expectation that the Messiah will rebuild the Temple and also enact the new covenant where God would now dwell in his people through the Holy Spirit.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. How did Jesus' actions threaten the rhythm of Judaism?
3. In what ways does truly following Jesus disrupt religion today?
4. Does Christianity today sometimes complicate access to the message of grace through Jesus? Explain and discuss.
5. How can we reframe our beliefs and practices to align more with the heart of Jesus in this area?
6. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being greatest) how would you rate your passion for the mission of Jesus in the world? Explain.

## NOTES:

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## PART 6 | REFRAMING NEW BIRTH

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By Dave Parker - Kirkland, WA

*Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. - John 3:5*

*"The simple reality is this: everyone who is truly a Christian is born again. There are no other kinds of Christians. There is no such thing as a non-born-again Christian or an unregenerate Christian. Yes, there are plenty of unregenerate church members and plenty of unregenerate people who profess to be Christians, but a person cannot be in Christ unless he or she is regenerate." – RC Sproul*

### John 3:1-21

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When our son was born, he stopped breathing after one breath. Finally, after many resuscitation techniques the oldest nurse grabbed him, turned him over and whacked him on the back a few times until we finally heard that awaited cry. It's a great story, but God did not give him new breath, new life so that we would walk around talking about what a tough birth he had. He gets on with life and lives. For Christians, the new birth is only the beginning of what being alive in Christ is all about. Live with expectancy!

Perhaps one of the most important chapters in the New Testament starts with a short debate of carefully chosen words in what will be an ongoing greater debate/conflict between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders that ultimately will send Jesus to the cross.

On one side of the debate you have Nicodemus (Nic), an honorable and respected Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, representing the Jewish Leaders...the "we" in vs 2. On the other side of the debate is Jesus, the "you". "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." (John 3:2)

Jesus, in vs. 3, not even addressing Nic's sarcastic flattery, cuts to the chase and prefaces his words carefully with a double emphasis "truly". In 3:3 "...no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." Totally changing the course of the conversation, Jesus uses the word "unless" which makes being born again a necessary condition. It's a far cry from the thought of a works-based religion.

Jesus clarifies in vs. 5 by explaining with another "truly, truly" that this rebirth is of both the water and the Spirit, a likely reference to Ezekiel 36:24-28. Note the reference to the sprinkling with clean water and giving of His Spirit in Ezekiel 36. This would have connected with Nic's Jewish thought. The Old Testament prophets emphasized that people needed two things: 1. They had to be purified. 2. They had to be resurrected by the power of God. Both are inferred by Jesus.

Ephesians 2:1-5 describes this renewal and regeneration/rebirth for Christians. A birth that now makes us alive when we were once dead in our sin. The text attributes it all to God... "but God" (vs.4)... not our works or accomplishments, but GOD's grace and power!

Jesus gives further explanation in vs. 6-10 separating the spiritual and the earthly things ending in a rebuke of Nicodemus' thinking in vs. 10-12. Note in vs. 10 & 11 that Jesus gives a play on Nic's words in vs. 3 re-defining who is on each side of the debate. "You" now refers to Nic and the Jewish leaders, while "we" refers to not just Jesus but the Trinity which defines fully Jesus' authority.

It's funny how the religious guys didn't get it and the others did. There are a lot of Nicodemus' who call themselves Christians. They challenge Jesus to do and say what they think Jesus should be doing rather than committing themselves to being "all in" and living a Jesus-led life exhibited by the evidence of regeneration. "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spirit gives birth to Spirit."

You know, ole Nic shows up again later in the gospel story at the cross. He and Joseph of Arimathea give Jesus a proper burial. Funny thing how the cross of Christ changes the hearts of man...not from the earth but from above. Even the flattering debaters can end up at the cross, honoring Jesus. I can't even imagine what it was like for Nic when he realized that those burial clothes and spices would only be needed for three days.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Consider RC Sproul's quote, how is it challenging? If you are a Christian, share what the regeneration process has been for you.
3. Explain how easy or difficult is it to fall into the trap of trying to turn over a new leaf in your own strength rather than recognizing that we need the Holy Spirit to produce new birth in us?
4. Does Ephesians 2:1-5 help you understand this rebirth? Who is responsible for the conversion and grace?
5. How does being born of water and Spirit connect to Ezekiel 36:24-28?

## NOTES:

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## PART 7 | REFRAMING SUCCESS

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By Aaron Bauer - Issaquah, WA

*"He must increase, but I must decrease." (John the Baptist)- John 3:30*

*"Jesus Christ's kingship will not crush you. He was crushed for you."  
– Timothy Keller*

### John 3:22-36

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When Jesus grabbed hold of my life at age 18, I was enthusiastic in my pursuit of him. It took no extra encouragement to start the new habits of bible reading and prayer. Immediately, I began to see others in my church family that were not as excited as I. *What was wrong with them?* A few years later, the discipline became harder and I needed more encouragement to open my Bible and to go to God in prayer. I was still engaging in Christian community and highly involved in serving people, but the internal motivation to connect with Jesus was fading. *What was wrong with me?* I wanted to make a difference in the world and was working hard to be a Christian (which I defined as having the outward character that would be appealing to people). It seemed I couldn't pull it off. Over and over, my strength failed.

There I was, a failure at being a Christian, right? Well, if we regard the inability to act like a Christian in our own strength as failure, we might be fooled. That may be our greatest reminder! For too much of my life, I have said, "Thanks, Jesus, I'll take it from here." Like the professional or hero showing up to the scene to take over the task from the little people, I've signaled to Jesus that while I appreciated his salvation, it was time for me to get to work. "I'll take it from here." Who are the little people and who is the hero? I'm not the hero. In my case, it is always good news when Jesus shows me my inability to walk out the Christian life so that He can "take it from here."

John the Baptizer had a robust ministry in Israel at the time Jesus started his public ministry. John was a famous rabbi, leading many disciples in a renewal movement, calling Israel to repent of its rebellious ways and prepare for the coming work of the LORD.

In John 3:22-36, we find a transition taking place. John's disciples were going away to follow after another rabbi. Jesus was in effect saying, "Thanks, John, I'll take it from here." At moments like this, character is tested. Who does Jesus think he is? What about all of my work to this point? The remaining disciples look for disappointment on John's face. They are searching his features to see if he is going to try to pressure them, even subtly, to remain loyal to him instead of following this new rabbi. Instead of disappointment they see joy. John expresses relief and a sense of great success as he says, "This joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease." John's moment in the spotlight was fading and he was exhilarated to give the stage to Jesus.

John the Baptizer knew what we must learn. Thy Kingdom Come means My Kingdom Go. Even great dreams and plans must be turned over to the one who was, who is, and who is to come. This is the Good News of Jesus as King. When Jesus takes over, all who submit to him can rejoice.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. In what areas of your life have you signaled to Jesus that you would carry on the work without him?
3. If Thy Kingdom Come means My Kingdom Go, what can you joyfully turn over to His care and control?
4. What would it look like as a group to embrace the "failure" to live self-powered religion and realize those moments as successes in letting Jesus "take it from here?"

## PART 8 | REFRAMING DIGNITY

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By Aaron Bauer - Issaquah, WA

*<sup>28</sup> So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" - John 4:28-29*

*"You can drink from all sorts of wells, but unless the source of your water is the Living Water Himself, you will never be satisfied."*

**– Beth Moore**

### John 4:1-42

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A few years ago, I was involved with the organization that presented relationship curriculum in public school health classes. Sometimes I would spend a whole day speaking to class after class about dating, sexuality, and boundaries to encourage them to make a choice for abstinence. I had a lot of fun engaging the students and they seemed to enjoy the break from their normal class structure. I would always highlight this statement: "If no one else has told you before, I am telling you now, you are valuable, and you are worth waiting for." Often times they would write a note of appreciation as well on their feedback forms. I can't count the number of times I received a note from a middle school or high school girl who said to me, "Thank you for teaching us today. I never knew I was valuable enough to be able to decide for myself."

No one had come to Sychar School District to present this kind of relationship education to the young women of the Class of A.D. 18. They were not allowed in school anyway. One young woman (we'll call her Photini), grew up with the reinforced belief that she was disposable to the men around her. Sure, Photini needed a man to protect her and provide for her in that society (her father might have been out of the picture), but they had not. One after the other, men divorced her and threw her out of their lives and into the arms of the next man. Feeling

more and more desperate and disposable, with less and less belief in her worth, she lands with the last man, who won't even marry her.

Photini slinks her way invisibly to Jacob's Well in the midday heat avoiding those whose opinions have withered her soul. She meets another man, a Jewish man. She knows she shouldn't be talking to him. "Doesn't he know he shouldn't be talking to me!"

Jesus says, "Give me a drink," and so it begins (John 4:7). Jesus proceeded to break all the known taboos. He sees Photini in her invisibility and vulnerability when others would have looked away. He shares a drink with a woman who has been serially and unceremoniously dumped and offers her everlasting hope. As thirsty as Jesus was, he had diagnosed a thirst, a desperation, in Photini that could only be satisfied by living water.

This "disposable" woman becomes essential to the whole town. Her witness to Jesus draws a crowd and they find in Jesus what she found, the Savior of Sychar, the Savior of the world. What treasures await us when we gain the perspective, the vision of Jesus.

Who are the invisible, disposable people in your everyday life? That cashier has a story. Your barista has been experiencing loss and pain. Your co-worker who never complains has real needs that haven't been expressed. The beggar has no meaningful support. The receptionist is keeping the disappointment away with the big smile. "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes! The fields are ripe for harvest!"

Jesus tells his disciples to stay alert and get real Gospel vision (John 4:35). Our impulse is different than Jesus' Gospel impulse when we encounter the "disposable" and the "invisible." Our impulse is to look away and go on with our day. Jesus steps into the awkward moment, even the scandalous moment, and brings life. He is there now in your everyday as well. Won't you join him? "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes!"

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Ask the Spirit to reveal to you the “invisible” person(s) whom you have been overlooking. Who are they?
3. Who in your everyday life needs to hear about their value in Jesus’ eyes?
4. What practical steps can we take as a group to stay alert to what Jesus is doing around us?

## NOTES:

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## PART 9 | REFRAMING FAITH

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By Aaron Bauer - Issaquah, WA

*Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.- John 4:50*

*"Seeing is not always believing." – Martin Luther King, Jr*

### John 4:43-54

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Family life can be full and fun. My wife and I have adopted six kids making our family experience robust, to say the least. Often times there are multiple conversations going on at once and a listening ear can be hard to come by. That's what we, the parents think, but so do the kids. The other night, my youngest was circling the kitchen island counter trying to get everyone's attention. He had crafted a magic trick to share with the current occupants of the room. "Hey \_\_\_, want to see a trick? Want to see a trick?" I heard him in the background as he walked by, but since he wasn't calling my name I didn't answer. As he walked past me in the kitchen, I noticed a coin in his ear. I called out, "Why do you have a nickel in your ear?!" "Dad" he replied, "That was part of my trick!" Yikes, sorry kid. Lots of people have tricks to get noticed: Pouting, stomping off, loud talking, boisterous gestures, jokes, and of course, magic tricks. What's your trick to get noticed? Do you hide in the corner signaling to people that they need to draw you out? Do you walk into a room and assume the party has just arrived?

*What was Jesus trying to accomplish by these signs he was acting out?* Early on in his ministry he tries to silence the publicity, so we should rule out that he was simply trying to gain a crowd. John reports that Jesus' signs were getting him noticed: in Cana as the true Master of the Feast (John 2:11) and in Jerusalem as Zealous Temple Warrior (John 2:17). Jesus is now approached, because of the signs that revealed his significance (glory), by an official in the town of Capernaum who has a dying son.

Jesus is not willing to do a trick on command and resists at first. He knows what is in mankind's heart and does not play into our scheme. Jesus will not be played. He is in control here and will reveal his connection to the Father when the Father tells him to reveal it. Luke records an episode with Jesus when he was on trial before Herod where we see this resistance to perform for the people. *"When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him"* (Luke 23:8) Herod's attitude was, "Jesus you are a curiosity. I'd like to see something. Show me something good." Jesus stood silent and wouldn't even speak to him.

Jesus seems to be asking the official in John 4:48, "What will you do with the sign if I give it to you?" A sign to one person might evoke curiosity, while a sign to another might evoke belief. The official is granted his request and his whole household become Jesus people because of the sign. ***Seeing is not always believing. Information does not always lead to transformation.***

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Does your interaction with Jesus (e.g. prayers, praise, requests, obedience) come from trust in Jesus or a curiosity to see if he is powerful?
3. In what ways have you asked Jesus to perform tricks for you, to play into your schemes? What do you think is a more faithful way to interact with Jesus?
4. How can we remind each other of Jesus' power regularly in a way that builds up our faith leading to transformation?

## PART 10 | REFRAMING THE SABBATH

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By Nathan Cedarland - Grays Harbor, WA

*<sup>28</sup> So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" - John 4:28-29*

*"Man was created on the sixth day right before God rested, so man was created as it were to enjoy the weekend with God." – Michael Wilcock*

### John 5:1-17

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**Summer Camp and the Already but Not Yet Reality** - During most of my high school and college years, I served as a counselor at a Christian camp for one week each summer. Some of my fondest memories were formed through those experiences. The camaraderie among the counselors and the joy of seeing the Spirit at work in the lives of students were like little glimpses of heaven on earth. By the end of the week, none of us wanted to leave and return to the "real world," and we had to be reminded of the fact that the world was still fallen and desperately in need of our ongoing engagement. The reality of the kingdom had broken into our lives that week, but much of the community around us was still devoid of that reality. If we wanted to extend to the world outside the glimpses of heaven on earth that we had experienced, it would require, not an ongoing retreat, but action.

**Back to John** In John 5, the Jewish religious leaders are fired up because Jesus has healed a man on the Sabbath. In their minds, this is a clear violation of the Law and one deserving of severe punishment. Jesus' response, as always, is insightful, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (John 5:17). The point Jesus seems to be making is this: the Sabbath is about experiencing life as it was meant to be, and ever since humanity fell into sin God has been working to restore what has been lost and broken. Jesus is working on the Sabbath, but paradoxically his work

is about restoring the true meaning of the Sabbath (unhindered enjoyment of relationship with God), and it is grounded in that very reality (his relationship and identity as the Son of God, see verses 19-20).

In Isaiah 58, there seems to be a similar connection between the active work of renewal and the idea of truly making the Sabbath a delight. We can see this by comparing verses 6-7 with verses 13-14.

*“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?” -Isaiah 58:6-7*

*“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” - Isaiah 58:13-14*

Jesus no doubt embodies Isaiah 58 as he rests in complete dependence upon the Father while also going about his Father’s work of bringing rest to a restless world. As we follow Christ, we should know that a life of promoting the gospel of true rest will be a life of action as long as we live in a fallen world. However, as long as we remember our identity based on his finished work, our Kingdom action will be carried out from a posture of rest.

Both the Father and the Son are working to restore Sabbath delight and wholeness to the world. Through the Spirit we can join them in that work and one day see things brought back to how they were supposed to be; all of life lived in constant enjoyment of a weekend with God.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. What are some specific areas in which you are not experiencing the rest that is available in the finished work of Jesus?
  - Ask the Spirit to reveal areas where self-dependence and unbelief are hindering you from experiencing the rest that Jesus purchased for you.
3. Through his Spirit in you, how does Jesus specifically want to bring new creation rest to others? -
  - As a community, be specific in prayer about asking the Spirit to reveal areas in which you can more intentionally take action to bring new creation rest to those around you.

## NOTES:

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## PART 11 | REFRAMING AUTHORITY

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By Nathan Cedarland - Grays Harbor, WA

*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. - John 5:24*

*“Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.” – Carl Sagan*

### John 5:1-17

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It was over 30 years ago, but I remember it like it was yesterday. My best friend was spending the night at my house and we were beginning to tell stories. Our stories were intended to share life together but in my young mind the truth got twisted by my desire to impress. Since we went to different schools I gave in to the temptation to embellish my stories about girls that I liked and girls that liked me. It was all very believable until I claimed I had kissed the hottest girl in school. He immediately wanted details. And so I preceded on the spot to weave this elaborate tale of how I had stumbled into her and landed with my lips planted on her. Even as I told it, I knew this story did not hold water. My false claim was exposed and our friendship suffered.

In this chapter we hear Jesus making even more outrageous claims than I did. And his audience knew how outrageous they were just like my friend Paul knew. The difference though is that Jesus' claims were legit. They understood him right. “He was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:17). And as a result they are plotting to kill him. Of all the extraordinary claims a person could make in first century Palestine this was the most egregious! As F.F. Bruce explains:

*“for Jews the line of demarcation between the divine and the human was strictly drawn; ...yet here was a man whose words and actions implied a trespass across the inviolable boundary that separated God from*

*mankind. That such a man should be alive and at large constituted a danger to the community...”*

Jesus reacts in verses 19-47. But how does he react? Does he begin to backpedal? No, first he lays the claims on even thicker then he calls in witnesses to corroborate them. “The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.” In other words, everything I do is in sync with God not just this Sabbath action. “greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel” in other words, you ain’t seen nothing yet! He claims that soon he will do such extraordinary things as raise the dead (John 5:21, 25) and judge the world (John 5:27). These are things only God can do. And Jesus claims he will do them. His claims cannot get any more extraordinary! In a few chapters he will make good on this first claim when he miraculously raises Lazarus from the dead. On the other claims we will have to wait til the day of judgment. But his ability to deliver on the first claim gives us confidence to believe he will deliver on the second claim as well.

After making these bold claims he brings three witnesses to the stand as it were, to verify his authority. The first witness he calls is John the Baptizer. If we scroll back a few chapters we see that John called him “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). John also said “I have seen and bear witness that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34).

The second witness he calls to the stand are his “works”. By this he inevitably is referring to his own mighty deeds which John has been recounting. John also calls them “signs”. There are 7 in his gospel and so far we have seen 3 - turning water into wine, healing the crippled man, healing the official’s son. These works testify on Jesus’ behalf that his claims are valid. “The very works that I am doing...bear witness about me that the Father has sent me” (John 5:36). He also says “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (John 10:37-

38) This is a major theme of John. It will show up again in 14:11. His works are performed as signs to help us believe.

The final witness he calls to verify his authority is the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus says “they...bear witness about me” (John 5:40). And he says “If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me” (John 5:46). Let that sink in. Jesus is claiming that Moses wrote about him!

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Have you ever made a false claim? Did you get away with it or did you get exposed?
3. Which of Jesus’ startling “works” do you find the most compelling and why?
4. What does it teach us about the nature of Christian faith to see Jesus so keen on laying out evidence and calling witnesses to the stand as it were? (See his response to Thomas in John 20:24-28)

## NOTES:

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## PART 12 | REFRAMING NEED

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By Paul Dean - Issaquah, WA

*When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"- John 6:14*

*Miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see.*

**-C.S. Lewis**

### John 6:1-15

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I gave up on full-time ministry in 1999. I didn't ask God, I just gave up after the church fired me for holding a certain social/theological position. I decided to pursue a career in teaching history, but a few years into that track I began to doubt my decision. I was truly conflicted about what direction to go so I decided to pray about it every morning, only confiding in my wife about my growing unease. I don't know what I expected as far as an answer, but the way it happened still gives me chills.

The morning started out like normal. I got up early, got ready, and headed down to my impressive study underneath the stairs. Amid the spiders and cold cement floor I prayed for God's guidance, "Father, do you want me to be a pastor or professor. Please make it clear so that I can follow you closely, Amen." I then got after my to-do list. A half-hour later I checked my email. There was a message from a professor and friend on campus asking to meet for coffee. A few hours later I was sitting in the Bookie on the WSU campus in Pullman. My friend came walking up to me, looking a bit nervous. He sat down and went right to the point. "I was reading and praying this morning and as strange as this might seem, I feel like God wants me to tell you that you should be a pastor not a professor." I didn't know what to say...I still don't. One year later I planted a church. I still serve that church, gladly, as a pastor. That was neither the first or last time God has very specifically answered a prayer.

According to secular humanism miracles, by definition, can't happen. Every event must have a non-supernatural explanation. While Christians believe that most events do have a natural, explainable cause, they also believe that the same Creator who brought everything into existence can and does interrupt the normal pattern of human events. This interruption is outside the natural, normal cause and can be defined as a miracle. This belief in miracles, referred to as Theism, proposes that the existence of a higher power or supreme being better explains the world we experience around us than believing that everything we experience is the result of blind chance over eons of time.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. In John 6 Jesus performs a much more vivid and unexplainable miracle than the one I saw with my own eyes in 2004. Take a moment to read the account and think about how you would respond if you saw a man take a sack lunch and feed a stadium size crowd. Would you believe it or instead look for more scientific explanation? Explain.
2. According to the C.S. Lewis quote above miracles are much more than tricks, they are God's way of getting our attention. Have you ever witnessed something that made you think God was answering a prayer or trying to get your attention? Explain.
3. What do you think the purpose of Jesus' miracle of feeding the large crowd was? How does that miracle reflect the larger purpose of Jesus coming to meet certain needs of humans?
4. *How quickly we forget God's great deliverances in our lives. How easily we take for granted the miracles he performed in our past.* - David Wilkerson. Take a moment to meditate on this quote. Then take time to express thanks through prayer for the historical and personal miracles God has performed. Specifically thank Him for the ultimate miracle of raising Jesus from the dead which has such profound implications for our life now and for eternity.

## PART 13 | REFRAMING POWER

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By Will Forrest - Issaquah, WA

*<sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."*

**- John 6:19-20**

*"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us..." – A.W. Tozer*

### John 6:16-21

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There is nothing more remarkable than watching a child admire the strength, the courage and the talents of their parent. The opposite is likely just as true. There is nothing more fearful for a parent than to have your child look to you as if you have endless strength, an impenetrable courage and an excess of skill and ability. As parents we know better. Yet, that is not the way a child perceives their parent. In fact, many children would take this a step further and insist that their parent not only has remarkable strength and ability but also has an endless supply of resource. I think back to when I've told my children the dreaded words, "We can't afford this." Without skipping a beat my children (multiple times I might add) replied, "Dad, just go to the bank." I thought to myself, "Oh, is that how this thing works (If only)." While every parent has all kinds of short-comings and limitations, it is remarkable the profound faith and confidence a child will place in the hands of a parent they know, love and trust. The greater the child knows the heart of the parent, the greater their confidence will be to press in and press on through all situations and circumstances. Certainly, this is the power of faith- the confidence to press on in all circumstances because of an unmistakable confidence in God's goodness and power. The power demonstrated by Jesus in John 6:16-21 is unparalleled. When Jesus walks on water, He reframes the way we consider power. Typically, our measurement of power is based on the

strength someone has to persist through difficulties (certainly a power also demonstrated by Jesus). Yet, Jesus not only demonstrated an incredible fortitude and unwavering resolve but demonstrated a power that is not subject to the natural laws. Gravity is not simply a theory, it is a fact (just look in the mirror at your aging body). Yet, Jesus is not under the order of creation but rather brings order to creation.

***How is this possible-*** Physics defied, science defied, experience defied? No person has this kind of authority to cause creation to yield to his will. Yet, Jesus does just that. His will causes all creation to respond in obedience. As the giver of the natural laws, He is uniquely qualified to over-ride them, as He would see fit. Paul described this truth writing, “all things were created through Him and for Him” (Col. 1:16-17; also see: John 1:1-3). The measurement of power and the perspective of authority is directly altered when the Christian recognizes that there is nothing that is not under the authority and power of Jesus. This is why it is so remarkable that Jesus would become, “obedient to death” (Phil. 2:8). The beauty of the Gospel is that it reveals a God who has power over the law of death, willingly subjects Himself to death.

Why? So, death would not have the final word over the life of the believer. While you and I will never have power over the laws of gravity, the laws of physics or the law death; we serve a God who has final word and authority over all of them. All of creation yields to the sound of His voice and the desires of His heart. The beauty of the cross is that Jesus (completely in control) yields to the consequence of death so His creation might be set free from the curse of sin (See 1 Cor. 15:54-57). When we come to know the heart of our Father, revealed through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus it produces a profound confidence to press in and press on in faith regardless of the waves that surround us. The only words Jesus speaks to the disciples when walking on water is, “It is I; do not be afraid” (John 6:20). They had every reason to be fearful yet there is no place for fear for those who are in the shadow of their powerful Savior, Jesus.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. If our belief in God has the ability to give us confidence in the midst of difficult circumstances (because of His power and authority), how do we grow in the quality (believing correctly) and quantity (increasing confidence) of our faith?
3. Share a time you found yourself afraid of the outcome of a situation. Discuss how faith in God overcame (or could have helped you overcome) those fears.
4. The only words Jesus speaks in this text are, “It is I; do not be afraid.” Discuss how Jesus is uniquely qualified to cast out the fears of life, death and circumstance?

## NOTES:

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## PART 14 | REFRAMING PROVISION

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By Will Forrest - Issaquah, WA

*<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”- John 6:26-27*

### John 6:22-71

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In a country that, as one article would state, is “drowning” in stuff, it becomes imperative for us to consider what it means for Christ to be the provider. There is a whole movement in our country that is attempting to counter-act our materialistic wiring called minimalism. Whether it is small houses, re-purposing or simply purging our closets, we as a country are beginning to recognize the abundance of that which we have been given and in which we live. Some articles suggest the average house size has tripled in the past 50 years, and that only 32% of families with two car garages can use one side. This doesn’t even get into the amount of money spent annually on storage units. While none of these things, in and of themselves, are bad, they have created an unhealthy dependence on our own resources and treasures. More specifically a reliance on our own provision. All this is to say that we as a people desperately need a reframing of our view of provision. There are a number of truths Jesus teaches in this text that help us begin to reframe our view of provision.

First, the provision that God provides and that we are called to labor for does not perish. Jesus said, “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal” (6:27). Oh, how often are days are filled with labors that center on perishable things. If you were around during the housing collapse in 2007 you know exactly how perishable our stocks, house-values and even means of income, truly is.

Christ did not come to labor for or call our lives into a labor to perishable things. Rather, Christ accomplished a work that was imperishable and invites us to join in that work!

Second, the provision of God provides sustenance and sustainability. Jesus continues to teach, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (6:35). If the mystery of Christ’s teaching had not yet been understood by the disciples and crowd who listened, they most certainly would begin to understand that Jesus is speaking of something far different than the loaves of bread and fish He had just multiplied. The feeding of the 5,000 was just a small demonstration of the abundance that is sourced in Christ. Nothing in creation was created in a way that it would satisfy the longings of our soul. This is why Augustine wrote, “Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in Thee.” The cravings of our soul are only temporarily satisfied by food and clothing but they are eternally satisfied when we come to know Christ as our provider.

Lastly, the provision of God provides a means for eternal life. Jesus culminates the truth of this teaching stating, “This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever” (6:58). The result of feasting on the provision of God, namely Christ, is eternal life. When we come to know Christ’s all-supreme worth in our life it reveals to the watching world that God is greater. He is greater than possessions, He is greater than wealth, He is greater than power and even greater than prosperity. He is God and all other glories pale in comparison.

Our challenge comes when we rely on our own provision- wealth, prosperity, resources and success rather than resting on the complete provision of Christ. As Christ taught His disciples and the crowds, there is only one provision that will endure-the completed provision of God accomplished through Christ.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Consider the way you spend your time, talents and treasures. Are you laboring for an eternal work or a temporary work? Take time to discuss the importance (and challenge) in arranging your life around the lasting work of Christ.
3. Scripture describes a life that is like a chasing after the wind. Describe a time when you chased after a dream and it left you disappointed. Contrast this to the testimony of Christ and His work in your life (consider when you first came to faith, a mission trip you went on or a victory the Lord accomplished in your life).
4. In what ways are you tempted to rest on your own resources to find satisfaction and joy in life? Contrast this to the provision God has provided through Christ and explain why Christ's provision is a far greater resource to depend on?

## NOTES:

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## PART 15 | REFRAMING THE LAW

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By Will Forrest - Issaquah, WA

*<sup>17</sup> If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. <sup>18</sup> The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. - John 7:17-18*

### John 7:1-24

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Some would say I am accident prone. I have broken my left ankle five times, had countless stitches over the years and broken bones most people have never heard of. Every time I went to the doctor the process of diagnosis was similar. Take an x-ray, have a doctor look at the x-ray and from that diagnosis receive a planned treatment. While the x-ray was necessary, it never once provided the means of healing just the diagnosis that revealed my need for healing. The Jews had long mis-understood the purpose of the law. What God had given to Israel in the Law revealed their need for Him. Yet, many of the Israelites took the Law and rather than let it reveal their need for God they used it as a means to earn favor in God's eyes. Simply stated, what was intended to diagnose was used for treatment.

About six months separate the timeline of the end of John chapter 6 (which takes place during Passover) and the beginning of chapter 7 (which focuses on the Feast of Booths). Colin Kruse explains the purpose of the Feast of Booths writing, "The feast had a double purpose: to remember Israel's time in the wilderness when they lived in booths, and to rejoice before the Lord after harvest (in particular the grape, olive and fruit harvests). It also involved looking forward to a new exodus, the time when the kingdom of God would be brought in with all its attendant blessings" ((John [IVP Academic], p. 181). This was one of the most joyful of the pilgrim feasts for Israel. The people would pour out water as a

remembrance of God providing water from the rock, which sustained Israel during their journey in the wilderness. In addition, they would light candles to remember God's abiding presence through the pillar of cloud and fire. Just as he had made the manna in the Exodus all about himself (John 6) now Jesus makes this feast all about himself as well. Both of these images, the water and the light, Jesus claims are to be found in him. He reveals Himself as the living water and the light of the world.

As Jesus attends this feast, we see Jesus confront the wayward understanding of Law as He describes Himself as the source of Truth (v.18). Yet, even though Christ is truth He was rejected because of man's sin (7:19). The Pharisees were meticulous in the way they kept the law concerning their giving but neglected the heart in which the law requires (Matt. 23:23). Jesus calls out on this hypocrisy stating, "Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?" (v.19). While teaching in the temple Jesus uses the law to expose the sinfulness of the hearer's hearts. They had exchanged the relationship with God for religious prestige and superficial gain. They paid little attention to their heart knowing it could not be measured by man, but when it came to the external measurements- they paraded around their religious superiority and superficial success. This masquerade led Jesus to elsewhere state, "They honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me" (Matthew 15:8). The law is a marvelous gift given to us by God, as a way to diagnose our sinful state revealing our need for a Savior. Jesus uses the law for what it was intended, exposing the sinfulness of man and their need for a Savior. The law of God, which was given to prepare man for the Savior was now being taught by the Savior who was perfectly fulfilling the law.

We, like the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day, are prone to use God's law as a means for treatment, rather than diagnosis. We often take what God teaches in Scripture and turn it in to a mask that we use to try to earn favor in man's and God's eyes rather than allowing it to reveal our need for the Savior and a greater dependence on the sanctifying work of

the Holy Spirit. We are prone to boast not in the victory of the cross but in our victories and moral accomplishments. May we heed the words of Christ and not judge by appearances but rightly judge allowing God's word to reveal and diagnose our ever-increasing need to be dependent on our Savior, Jesus.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Think through a time when you had a wrong diagnosis (hint: consider when you took a car to the mechanic or went to the doctor). How did that wrong diagnosis impact your treatment?
3. How might you use the word of God as a means to diagnose sin in your own life?
4. As you think through the importance of right diagnosis, what disciplines might you need to implement to rightfully diagnose sin in your life?
5. God always exposes sin for the purpose of illumination, not isolation. How might you allow the revealing of sin in your life to create a greater intimacy with your church? How might you allow the revealing of sin to create a deeper dependence on the completed work of Christ (Consider Romans 8)?

## NOTES:

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## PART 16 | REFRAMING REFRESHMENT

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*<sup>37</sup> On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” - John 7:37-38*

*“Footfalls echo in the memory, down the passage we did not take,  
towards the door we never opened, into the rose garden.”*

*— T.S. Eliot, **Four Quartets***

### **John 7:25-52**

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A friend of mine was planning a camping trip by one of the beautiful Alpine lakes in the Cascade mountains. He had a cancellation in his group so he offered for me and my family to join him. Sitting on the sun kissed shore gazing at the sparkling turquoise glacier water sounded refreshing to me, so I brought the idea up to my family. Before I could even finish my sales pitch, one of them responded “I don’t like camping” When they considered the invitation, they did not see refreshment they saw disappointment. All they could think of was a relentless mosquito in the tent and a restless night on the ground. So why even bother? They were not persuaded by the 2018 North America Camping Report sponsored by KOA which claimed there was an increase of 2.6 million camper households last year. Their mind was made up.

When it comes to Jesus Christ the statistics are even more amazing than camping. According to a recent report from the Pew Research Center, there were 2.3 Billion people around the world in 2015 who claimed to find refreshment in Jesus Christ. Thinking about those billions of people spread out around the globe reveals the ironic tragedy of John 7. Here was Jesus, publicly declaring “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink” Yet many ended up missing out on his offer, due to their pre-determined ideas and assumptions about Jesus. Tragically people do the same thing today.

The context of Jesus' claim is significant. It was the Feast of Tabernacles. This was one of the three major feasts God had given to the people of Israel. It was a time when everyone went up to Jerusalem to the Temple to remember God's miraculous provision for the people when they were wandering in the desert. There was a ceremony each day for seven days when they would draw water from the pool of Siloam and march it up in a joyful procession up to the Temple. They then poured it out on the altar as a way of commemorating the water God had provided through the rock in the wilderness (Exodus 17:1-7).

One key scripture during the Feast of Tabernacles is Isaiah 12:2-3:

“Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.  
The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense;  
he has become my salvation.  
With joy you will draw water  
from the wells of *salvation* (Hebrew: יְשׁוּעָה; *Yeshua*)”

Verse 3 is amazing because in Hebrew the word for salvation is *Yeshua*. *Yeshua* is also the Hebrew pronunciation of the name Jesus. God had been planning since before the beginning of time to send his one and only Son to fulfill his promises to the patriarchs and the prophets of Israel. And now Jesus (*Yeshua*) was here on the scene doing just that.

Jesus is claiming to be the ultimate water of salvation- the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises that God had made to his people. He is saying that if you want refreshment look to him. God once refreshed people in the wilderness through the rock but today he is refreshing people through Jesus. His opponents are like the people T.S. Eliot refers to in his poem who never opened the door to the rose garden. Or like my family who would not camp. What a missed opportunity. They were evaluating Jesus on the wrong criteria. Assuming the Messiah would go from total obscurity to instant fame they assumed nobody would “know” his origins. So they prematurely dismissed Jesus since they knew his family, and they assumed he came “from Galilee.” The irony here is that

he actually wasn't from Galilee. He was born in Bethlehem and he was "from" the Father. "The Father has sent me" (John 5:36-37) "I am from him" (7:29) "I have come here from God" (8:42). Until we properly understand Jesus' origin we will continue to dismiss him and thus miss out on the refreshment he offers.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. When you want refreshment where do you turn first?
3. What assumptions or preconceived ideas about Jesus hold you back from turning to him? (Do you assume he is boring? Do you assume he will ask too much of you? Do you assume he will not answer you? Do you assume...)
4. How have you experienced refreshment and the Holy Spirit flowing in your life?
5. What preconceived ideas are keeping your friends away from exploring Jesus? How can you dismantle those?

## NOTES:

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## PART 17 | REFRAMING FORGIVENESS

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By Rich McCaskill - Issaquah, WA

*<sup>10</sup> Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" <sup>11</sup> She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."- John 8:10-11*

*"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."  
- Mahatma Gandhi*

### John 7:53-8:11

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One of the worst stories in the news last year was the story of Dylann Roof. Dylann was a young white man who killed nine members of a Bible Study group in South Carolina at a historic black church. When his initial hearing came up before the judge, many of the grieving family members were there. But shockingly, instead of anger and rage, these family members of the victims expressed forgiveness. This was a radical and beautiful example of how Christian faith gives people the supernatural ability to forgive others who have hurt them in the most painful ways.

The Huffington Post, in "Victims' Families Meet Dylann Roof" reported that Nadine Collier, the daughter of victim Ethel Lance, said to Roof, *"I forgive you, I will never talk to her ever again, never be able to hold her again. I forgive you and have mercy on your soul. You hurt me, you hurt a lot of people, but I forgive you."* Alana Simmons, granddaughter of victim Daniel Simmons, also spoke to the suspect. *"Hate won't win,"* she said. *"My grandfather and the other victims died at the hands of hate. Everyone's plea for your soul is proof that they lived in love and their legacies live in love."* They were living out the verse in the New Testament that says:

*"Forgiving each other: as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (Colossians 3:13).*

Jesus' forgiveness in their lives gave them ability to turn around and forgive a murderer. And these are not isolated examples. To search the history of the Christian movement you will discover over and over again, examples of forgiveness flowing out of Jesus' followers. Recent notable examples include the forgiveness showed by the Amish community following the school shooting in 2007 and also the ministry of Corrie Ten Boom after World War II.

And as we look at John 8 we see where this forgiveness all began. It began with Jesus. He is the one on the scene who has no sin and yet he does not cast a stone at her. Instead he tells her ***"I do not condemn you"***. The reason Jesus can stand up for her and protect her from condemnation is that later in his life he is going to take her condemnation on himself on the cross. As he already told us earlier in the gospel "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in the Son is not condemned" (John 3:17-18).

Even though this passage of text is not found in the oldest manuscripts of John, scholars still agree it has all the earmarks of historical veracity. So it is included in the Greek New Testament enclosed with double square brackets to indicate it may be a late addition.

Even so, though many doubt John himself wrote it, the story resonates with other New Testament passages about Jesus. In Luke's gospel, Jesus encounters a prostitute. Luke calls her a "woman who has lived an immoral life" and Jesus tells her point blank "Your sins are forgiven." Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' And he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace'" (Luke 7:48-50). What strength!

Forgiveness was key part of his life. And when his followers begin to preach around the Mediterranean world, they are quoted as saying "everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:43).



Notice Jesus does not say that her sin did not matter. He did not say that sin is not a big deal. What he said was “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more” (John 8:11). We see here the combination of amazing grace towards the sinner and determined opposition towards the sin. How the world would be changed if we as his followers treated people the same way.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Do you identify more with the guilty and ashamed woman or with the self-righteous and angry crowd? Why?
3. What has Jesus forgiven you of?
4. Read Romans 8:1 out loud and reflect on its meaning. How would your week be different if this verse was in the front of your mind at work and at home? How would your Sunday mornings be different if this verse was in the front of your mind?

## NOTES:

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## PART 18 | REFRAMING ENLIGHTENMENT

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<sup>14</sup> Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. -**John 8:14**

*"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness."*

**- Desmond Tutu**

### John 8:12-30

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When God showed up in the wilderness to recruit a fearful and reluctant Moses he had to answer the age-old question "Who are you?" His answer was utterly original. "I AM that I AM" when you go to the people tell them "I AM" sent you (Exodus 3:14). God is the I AM as Dreamworks Pictures beautifully depicted in Prince of Egypt their first traditionally animated full feature film. As a young Jewish boy, Jesus would have definitely heard repeatedly about this mighty revelation of God's name to Moses in the burning bush. And yet, after encountering this story time and time again, Jesus grew up to do something shockingly new with it. Others Jewish boys had heard the story and fancied themselves a new Moses sent to rescue Abraham's descendants from oppressors like Rome, and Assyria. They claimed to come from God to bring freedom, liberty, and deliverance to the people. Jesus however was different. He read these stories and he saw himself not so much in the role of Moses but in the role of the all-consuming fire that engulfed the bush and called out to Moses. Jesus saw himself as "I AM"

Of the four Gospel writers, John was probably the closest personal friend to Jesus. When he answers the question, "Who are you?" he always describes himself as, "the disciple Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7) and while there are many themes that arise throughout his gospel, one of the central ones is the identity of Jesus. John gives his readers a front row seat to Jesus' answer to the same question Moses asked God. In this gospel Jesus shocks his hearers by answering the same way God did to Moses- "I AM!"

Jesus' makes this claim about his own identity through the frequent use of a certain Greek phrase "*egō eimi*" (ἐγὼ εἰμι) *eimi* is the Greek word for "I am" and *egō* is the Greek word for "I". Because *eimi* by itself already means "I am" the addition of *Egō* in front of it, is purposively redundant for emphasis. As such, the phrase literally means "I I Am" or "I Myself Am" This phrase jumps out at readers of the Greek because of its unusual construction. It also jumps out at us is because it is an echo of God's divine name from the burning bush.

If you read the John closely you will find that Jesus makes several jarring claims about his identity. In each case he uses the same construction – *egō eimi* "I AM"

- **John 4:19-26** "I who speak to you **AM** he," (the woman at the well)
- **John 6:16-20** "**I AM**; do not be afraid" (Jesus walking on the water)
- **John 6:25-51** "**I AM** the bread of Life"
- **John 8:12**; "**I AM** the light of the world"
- **John 8:23-30** " I said that you will die in your sins unless you believe that **I AM** , you will die in your sins"... "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I AM**,
- **John 8:48-59** "Before Abraham was Born **I AM**"
- **John 10:1- 9** "I tell you the truth **I AM** the gate for the sheep,"
- **John 10:10-17** "**I AM** the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd"
- **John 11:17-44** " **I AM** the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live even after dying."
- **John 14:1-7** "**I AM** the way the truth and the life"
- **John 15:1-5** "**I AM** the true vine, and my father is the gardener.
- **John 18:5-8** he stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" he asked. "Jesus the Nazarene," they replied. "**I AM** he" Jesus said. (Judas who betrayed him was also standing with them.) As Jesus said "**I AM** he," They all drew back and fell to the ground!

Another theme in this gospel is light. John references light more than Matthew, Mark and Luke combined. He tells us in Jesus was “life and that life was the light of all mankind” (John 1:4). And here in John 8:12 Jesus tells us “I AM the light of the world.”

The context for this claim is the Feast of Booths. One of the ways the people of the time celebrated the Feast of Booths was to build high flaming torches along in the Temple area to commemorate the pillar of fire in which God dwelt amongst his people in the wilderness. Here Jesus claims that **he** is the light. He claims that really this feast is all about Him. His claim confronts his audience with a crisis. Either they will accept his testimony or they will reject it. He is not willing to be classified as simply another human teacher among other human teachers pointing his pupils towards the light. He insists that he himself is the light and that only through him can one stay out of confusion.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Which I AM statement of Jesus is most significant to you? why?
3. When did you come to believe Jesus was the light of the world?
4. According to 1 John 2:9-10 what does being in the light entail? And what would it look like if you lived that out this week?

## PART 19 | REFRAMING YOUR FATHER

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By Christopher Rich - Marysville, WA

*“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,<sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:31-32*

*“The sins of the father are to be laid upon the children.” - William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice*

### John 8:31-59

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Jesus engages specifically with “believing Jews” regarding true nature of freedom and family. In this discussion three key truths are revealed:

***On our own we are less free than we can see. (v31-38)*** The Jews say they have never been enslaved. Their nation’s history of slavery in Egypt to current Roman occupation says otherwise. Jesus says they are slaves, slaves to sin. Knowing, seeing, and obeying the truth will set them free. Jesus is the truth.

***We will follow in our father’s footsteps. (v39-47)*** In sin, all of us are children of wrath. Jesus says we are of our father the devil, one who has no truth and authors lies. We don’t hear the truth because we are from a family of lies. We need a new family.

***Jesus honors His Father who is God the Father. (v48-59)*** The Jews had placed their hope in being in Abraham’s family. They don’t realize the hope of Abraham was life found with God through Jesus. To accept and follow Jesus will not lead to death. God’s glory is in Jesus. You cannot say you love God and do not know Jesus. Jesus is the I AM who spoke to Moses to lead his people from slavery. We need new life. Each of us needs to be set free from our unfit father the devil who has us in a home of lies and death. Jesus comes to gloriously lead a people from this damned family to a new and better forever family defined by truth and life with God as our Father.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. The Jews and Jesus have divergent perspectives on what family they are in and how this shapes their history and their hope, discuss the many ways who our “father” impacts our identity, attitudes and actions.
3. When have you “whitewashed” part of your past to forget how sin was impacting you? Why is it important to have an accurate understanding of what God has done in your life?
4. **Read Ephesians 2:1-10.** What does it mean to be “children of wrath”? How does God’s love change us into new people, in a new family, with a new future?

**PRAY** – Ask God in the Holy Spirit to show you where your sin has actually led you to slavery. Praise Him for adopting you into His family through faith in Jesus.

## NOTES:

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## PART 20 | REFRAMING SIGHT

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By Christopher Rich - Marysville, WA

*<sup>25</sup> He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." - John 9:25*

*The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision  
-Helen Keller*

### John 9:1-41

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In passing a man born blind, Jesus' disciples wonder if his blindness is a consequence of his personal sin or generational sin passed down to him. Jesus provides illumination to the situation on many levels. He brings clarity to the disciples, physical and spiritual sight to the blind man, and judgement to the Pharisees who do not see the value of Jesus' work and identity.

***The Healing (v1-12):*** A man is born blind. This was not result of sin either of his family or his own but so Jesus glorious work could be displayed in his life. Jesus prepares to heal and tells him to act. The man, anointed by Jesus, obeys, sees, and tells others. This miraculous action spurs an intense investigation.

***The Investigation (v13-34):*** Since the healing was performed on the sabbath, Pharisees were concerned the law regarding rest was violated. They investigate the healed man (twice) and his parents, seeking to show Jesus has violated the law and "is a sinner". They miss the point, the facts are plan to all, the man was blind but now he sees.

***The Verdict (v35-41):*** The Pharisees cannot or will not see Jesus for who He is. They reject Him and His work (by casting out the healed man) and they are judged guilty by Jesus. Jesus seeks the healed man, reveals himself as the savior and the man believes.

Because of sin we are all born blind to the truth of God. Only God in Jesus can heal us to cure our blindness, see Jesus for who He truly is, and worship Him.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Not all suffering is because of personal sin. What are some examples in your life, or from others, where great suffering or difficulty were experienced? Where have you been able to see God's work in the midst of suffering? What comfort can we have when God's purposes are less clear?
3. How is it significant that Jesus calls this blind man to faithful obedience as part of his healing? Where is God calling you to greater faithfulness or obedience to Him for the purposes of your healing?
4. In verse 39 Jesus says, "For Judgement I come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." What does this mean? How does spiritual blindness impact who we engage with those who don't see Jesus for who He is? **READ and discuss 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.**

**PRAY** – Ask God to cure the spiritual blindness and give sight those people in your community you are trying to reach with the Gospel. Thank God for His healing work in your life.

## NOTES:

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## PART 21 | REFRAMING SHEPHERDING

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By Christopher Rich - Marysville, WA

*<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. <sup>11</sup> I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.- **John 10:10-11***

*The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheeps for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act as the destroyer of liberty. Plainly, the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of liberty. – **Abraham Lincoln***

### John 10:1-21

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Following the healing of the blind man, Jesus explains what it means to be a true shepherd to His people/flock. Sheep need a shepherd for protection and provision. There are strangers to the sheep/flock who come in to take and steal, sheep will not listen to strangers because they do not know them. They will hear and obey the voice of the true shepherd who knows and cares for them.

Jesus draw clear contrasts between Himself as the good shepherd and the thief. He not only knows and speaks to his flock but will purposefully lay down his life for his flock. However, the thief comes to the flock only to take, kill, and destroy. Jesus brings life to the flock that is rich, full and abundant. There is a real relationship between the sheep and their shepherd that is birthed out of genuine concern for the sheep's safety and well-being that cannot be imitated by mere hired hands. Where Jesus is clear on His identity and roll in the life of His people, many of the assembled crowd and leaders are still not convinced.

There is an enemy whose intentions are to steal, kill, and destroy us. Jesus is our Good shepherd who is present with us, provides life for us, and protects us from the evil one giving His life for ours. In turn, we love and

care for others, requires knowing and sacrificing for others. Regardless of our background, in Christ we are all part of one flock with one shepherd.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Why do sheep respond to the voice of the shepherd while rejecting the voice of the thief? Discuss Jesus' characterization of a Good Shepherd as one who protects, provides, and sacrifices for his sheep. What is the desire of the thief?
3. How does the difference between "Good Shepherd" and "Hired Hand" play out in the context of pastoral leadership? What are some defining marks of leaders you've engaged with who are good shepherds and those who are hired hands?
4. In verse 17 Jesus says "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again." What is He referring to? What does this teach us about the death of Jesus? Who is responsible for the cross? **READ Acts 2:22-24 for further insight.**

**PRAY** – Seek the voice of the Good Shepherd who sacrificed Himself so you may have abundant life. Praise God for His continued protection and provision. Ask God to give you the heart of the Good Shepherd to love and care for the other sheep in your gospel community.

## NOTES:

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## PART 22 | REFRAMING OUTRAGE

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By Christopher Rich - Marysville, WA

*<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. -John 10:27-28*

*I don't know what we're yelling about!...Loud Noises! – Brick Tamland in Anchorman*

### John 10:22-42

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Our response to the identity of Jesus is all that matters when considering His words and works. During Hanukkah outrages the audience with some bold claims. If Jesus is who he says he is then He should be worshipped and obeyed.

**Jesus the Savior (v22-30)** - During the festival many want to hear plainly from Jesus about who it is. Are you the Christ, the Savior-King of God's people? Jesus previous words and action should be enough to determine. He is here to give people eternal life with Him saving them from the consequences of sin and death.

**Jesus the Son (v31-39)** – Given clarity the response from many to Jesus is not to receive Him but reject him. They seek his death because He claims to be God. Jesus works show He is doing the will of His Father. They don't accept His true words or His powerful works, instead they seek to arrest Him.

**Jesus the True (v40-41)** - John the Baptizer spoke of Jesus words and works. As John's followers encounter Jesus, they see all said about Him is true and they believe.

Our problem isn't where God in Jesus has been unclear and we've misunderstood but where He has been clear and we do not want to receive it. Jesus is clear on His identity (Son of God), His purpose (Savior

– King) and our need (eternal life). God should be outraged that we have falsely make ourselves equal with Him, we deserve death. God responds by sending His Son who IS God to be rejected and killed so we may live.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. What to we learn about the driving motive behind the explicit opposition to Jesus? How is the section of scripture foundational to our understanding about the identity and purpose of Jesus? How does it contradict the claim of some that Jesus never claimed to be the Son of God?
3. When have you struggled not to understand difficult teaching about the character and nature of God, but to receive it? What should our response be when God's word is clear?
4. In verse 28 Jesus says ""I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." What does this teach us about the nature of our life with God in Christ? **Read Philippians 1:6**

**PRAY** – Thank God for being clear on the identity and purpose of Jesus. Ask Him to reveal where you are rejecting what He has made plain. Praise Him for comfort of knowing He is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch you out of His hands.

## PART 23 | REFRAMING DEATH

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By Christopher Rich - Marysville, WA

*<sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” <sup>44</sup> The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”- **John 11:43-44***

*On a long enough time line, the survival rate for everyone drops to zero. – **The Narrator – Fight Club***

### John 11:1-44

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Jesus friend Lazarus is in deteriorating health. Lazarus’ sisters are concerned and send for Jesus to arrive now to bring healing. Jesus delays for two days and Lazarus succumbs to his illness and dies. Jesus delay was for a purpose. He knows the disease will not ultimately lead to lasting, death but will serve to bring Jesus Glory. Here we learn:

***Jesus is Life (v17-27)–*** We question what God is doing in the midst pain and suffering but He tells us there is a real promise of eternal life. This life is in the future and is now.

***Jesus Feels (v28-37) -*** Jesus is about to perform a great miracle in front of many and bring Lazarus back to life. Yet He is still present and moved by the deep mourning and suffering of His people to genuinely weep with them sharing their grief.

***Jesus Saves(v38-44) –*** Jesus seeing the death of His friend cannot and will not let death win. He prays to the Father and speaks life into His friend with the power of the one who spoke the entirety of creation into existence. Lazarus is free because of Jesus.

Our God is acquainted with grief and pain and empathic to us when we’re sad or suffering. He can be both present with us in suffering even

as He is preparing for glory. God takes us who are spiritual dead and brings us to life with the power of His word so we can live unbound from death and free with Him and His people.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. What was the purpose of Jesus delaying His arrival in Bethany? When have you been frustrated with God's timing to act in your life circumstances? How does knowing God's character and the nature of eternal life impact how respond when our circumstances seem hopeless?
3. Verse 35 says "Jesus wept.", before He raised Lazarus from the dead. What do we learn about Jesus heart for suffering people from this response? How is it comforting to know we have a God who empathizes with us?
4. How can difficult circumstances can be redeemed for God's Glory? What do we learn about the power of Jesus words to bring life in this instance?

**PRAY** – Ask God to give you perseverance in the face of suffering. Praise the God who speaks life into dead situations. Bring your fear, grief, and pain to the God who empathizes with our difficult experiences.

## NOTES:

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## PART 24 | REFRAMING THE PLOT

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By Jim Fikkert - Mount Vernon, WA

*Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish. - John 11:50*

*“To put it most simply, the evangelical ethos is activist, populist, pragmatic, and utilitarian. It allows little space for broader or deeper intellectual effort because it is dominated by the urgencies of the moment.” – Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind**

### John 11:45-12:11

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People have very different responses to Jesus. A large part of this response comes from what they value in this life.

***Jesus is a challenge to pragmatism (11.45-57).*** The Pharisees struggle with Jesus, because Jesus is a challenge to the life that they have committed themselves to. The Pharisees represent us in this story. Like the Pharisees, we don't like what commitment to Jesus will cost us. When the Pharisees say: *If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation* (11:48), it sounds a lot like something we might say.

***Worship is an act against pragmatism (12.1-6).*** Mary's act of anointing Jesus was foolish by every earthly measure. Jesus praises her for recognizing that He is far more valuable than anything this world offers. She gives up the most valuable thing that she has as a reflection of her love for Him.

***The gospel is the ultimate act against pragmatism (12.7).*** Jesus connects His death to Mary's sacrifice. From start to finish, His life was an act against pragmatism. He emptied Himself, giving up heaven to come to earth. He refused the offers of earthly glory from Satan. He gave up His

life freely as a sacrifice for His people. He offers much more than a momentary solution.

***Our response to Jesus will show where we put value (12.8-11).*** Two groups are represented here: those who see something in Jesus that is worth giving up for and those who see Jesus as a threat to what they really value. How will you respond?

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. What areas of your life are prone to pragmatism? Where are you willing to set Jesus aside for a short-term solution?
3. Look at Judas' response to Mary's action in **12.5**. Why does Jesus correct him? What does Jesus' comment about the poor mean for our Christian service?
4. Read **Philippians 2.1-11**. How is the example of Jesus meant to inform how we treat those around us? How does His glory help push us past pragmatism?

**PRAY** – Ask God in the Holy Spirit to reveal to you where you are withholding worship in fear of what it may cost you. Thank Him for all He gave up for you.



## PART 25 | REFRAMING EXPECTATIONS

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By Jim Fikkert - Mount Vernon, WA

*Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. -John 12:25-26*

*“Death may be the King of terrors... but Jesus is the King of kings!”  
- Dwight L. Moody*

### John 12:12-36

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Jesus is a king like no other. Our expectations of His kingship can get in the way of seeing Him for who He is.

**Jesus enters Jerusalem as a King (12-19).** Everything about Jesus' entry to Jerusalem was a declaration of His kingship. While even the disciples do not pick up on all of the symbols, the people present recognize that Jesus is to be celebrated and they declare: *Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!* Jesus is the promised king, come to rescue His people.

**Jesus glorification comes through death (20-26).** The people are prepared for Jesus to lead them to a better life and they want to be connected to Him as He ascends. Jesus makes it clear that the path to glory is through sacrifice: first His own and then the self-denial of His followers. The Christian life is defined by giving up what is temporary for that which is eternal.

**The king is also the judge (27-36).** Jesus declares that His act as king is to save His people by dying for them. The part of the people is to recognize His act. Jesus encourages them to see the light, knowing that their acknowledgment of the true king is the only way they will experience His kingship as 'sons of light.' We can either trust the true

king and receive His inheritance, or we can attempt to rule and receive the just punishment for our sin.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. What inaccurate expectations have you put on Jesus? How have these expectations hindered your joy?
3. What does Jesus mean when He says that we must lose our life? What is the fruit that we should expect as a result?
4. Read **1 Timothy 6.12-16**. How does the kingship of Jesus change the priorities of our lives? How does it free us?

**PRAY** – Ask God in the Holy Spirit to show you the other kings and kingdoms you serve in this life. Praise Jesus for being a merciful king.

## NOTES:

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## PART 26 | REFRAMING TRUST

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By Jim Fikkert - Mount Vernon, WA

<sup>46</sup> *I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. -John 12:46*

*"We are dying from overthinking. We are slowly killing ourselves by thinking about everything. Think. Think. Think. You can never trust the human mind anyway. It's a death trap." - Anthony Hopkins*

### John 12:37-50

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Faith is an active relationship that requires love, hope, and trust. Jesus breaks down these elements as He explains why not everyone has faith.

**Lack of faith come from hardened hearts (37-40).** Jesus points back to Isaiah to show that faith is only possible for those who have soft hearts. Those who do not trust God can see miracles and hear the truth, but can not commit themselves to Him.

**Lack of faith comes from fear of man (41-43).** It says that some of the people believed, but would not confess the faith because they feared the Pharisees. This is not just an issue of keeping their faith a secret, this is allowing their faith to be squeezed out by a love for something else. The main issue is that: *they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.*

**Lack of faith comes from trusting only what can be seen (44-50).** Jesus makes it clear that He is here on earth on a mission of salvation: to bring light into darkness. This mission is not the end. He will come again to judge, to set all things right (which includes the punishment of sin). We do not always feel this eternal battle, but it is always there. Our only hope is to be connected to the Savior and Judge for when that final day comes.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Which of the barriers to faith resonate the most with you? Do you find love, hope, or trust to be the most difficult part of faith?
3. What does Jesus mean when He says: *I did not come to judge the world but to save the world*? How can this be misunderstood to reframe Jesus?
4. Read **Romans 2.2-4**. What does Paul say is the purpose of God's kindness and patience? What does this mean about how we talk about God's grace?

PRAY – Ask God in the Holy Spirit to soften your heart to make you able to see God for who He is and to live a life of worship in return. Praise Jesus for being so kind and patient with us.

## NOTES:

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**PORTRAITS  
OF  
GLORY**  
**JOHN 13-17**

## PART 27 | REFRAMING LEADERSHIP

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By Jim Fikkert - Mount Vernon, WA

*<sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. - John 13:13-15*

*“Not everybody can be famous. But everybody can be great, because greatness is determined by service. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know about Plato or Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know Einstein’s theory of relativity to serve. You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love.”*

*– Martin Luther King Jr.*

### John 13:1-20

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Jesus mission on this earth was performed in the posture of servanthood. He stepped down from His throne to take on humanity in order to rescue His people. At the Last Supper, Jesus gives us a physical display that reflects this:

***Jesus does the dirty work of washing (1-11).*** As Jesus take off His outer cloak, He is rolling up His sleeves and getting down to business. He goes from disciple to disciple, in the posture of a servant, and lovingly cleans their feet. When Peter tries to stop Him, Jesus makes it clear that no one who doesn’t let Him cleanse them will be part of His family. He is making it clear that no one is able to clean their own feet, they must accept the gift of grace.

***Jesus calls His disciples to take on the same posture (12-17).*** This example of Jesus also acts as a lesson for the disciples on leadership. To be a Christian leader is to be a servant. Those who are mature in the

Christian faith are not those who have the most (gifts, following) it is those who give the most. Serving is the power of the Christian life.

***Jesus points out the alternative (18-20).*** The betrayer is in the background of this story. Judas, the one who sold Jesus out, was right there getting his feet washed. He is an example to us of what happens when we are not others-focused: the sin within us destroys others. The only way to combat the natural outworking of our sinful self-centeredness is to train our hearts toward others through service.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Who are the people you have the hardest time serving? Why do you think that is?
3. Jesus says: *whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.* What does this tell us about God's Trinitarian nature? What does the Trinity have to do with servant leadership?
4. Read **2 Peter 5.1-8**. What does Peter call us to practice? What does he promise this will lead to? How does this help us to keep serving?

**PRAY** – Ask God in the Holy Spirit to help you to see others as He sees them. Praise Jesus for being such a compassionate, servant-minded God.

## PART 28 | REFRAMING FAILURE

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By James Kumin - Kirkland, WA

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me -John 14:6*

### John 13:21-14:14

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**Judas (13:21-30)** Did you catch where Judas is almost certainly sitting (well, "reclining") at the Last Supper? Go back and read these verses if you need to, and think about it. {pause} Ok, ready? Notice that John is close enough to lean on Jesus. Peter is far enough away he has to motion to John to ask Jesus the question. Judas is close enough to Jesus to be quietly handed a piece of dripping bread. In a society saturated with enactments of honor, Judas is sitting right next to Jesus. The place of honor. And giving this "morsel", it is entirely likely that this is a particular part of the Passover dinner, in which giving the morsel is a particular mark of honor. The very night of his betrayal, Jesus honors Judas and physically enacts his friendship with Judas. *He loved his own...to the very end.* Even Judas. **Judas utterly fails Jesus this very night. Yet see how kind Jesus is to the very end!**

**Peter (13:31-14:4)** Have you seen a small child who suddenly realizes that their mom or dad is going somewhere...and the child is not going? And the child suddenly realizes this? Maybe a neighbor kid, or a friend's child, or your own:

- "Dad, where are you going?"
- "I'm going to work, kiddo."
- "I wanna come! Can I come?"
- "No, I'm sorry, you can't come with me, kiddo. You need to go to preschool today!"
- "Ahhwhwh! Whhhyyyy? I wanna go work!"



***Loosely translated:*** “C’mon dad/mom! I get to be with you lots of other times. Why can’t I be with you at work? *Where are you going? I wanna be there too!*” Peter wants to be with Jesus. Badly. He just can’t be.

As it turns out, though, it’s not just a matter of physical impossibility, that Peter can’t ascend to heaven with Jesus immediately post-resurrection. It’s also that Peter will bail out on Jesus – Peter won’t be able to be with Jesus because Peter won’t be morally/courageously able to follow Jesus where Jesus goes.

But notice Jesus’ words in 14:1-4 come right with Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s failure. “*You will be with me, Peter. But don’t trust your ability to follow me. Trust my ability to come get you. Don’t trust your ability to lay down your life. Trust my ability to give you life.*” **Take a minute to let yourself feel Jesus’ open-eyed, multi-faceted kindness to Peter in this moment.**

***Thomas and Philip (14:5-14)*** - Have you ever been at a funeral, and through the words of children, ostensible friends, even spouses of the deceased essentially say they didn’t really know the person? When the most personal things you hear are “He really loved his spaghetti, didn’t he” or “She always kept her deck plants so well watered” – well, it doesn’t speak well for the quality of the relationships.

It’s easy to focus on verses 13-14 here: asking anything and Jesus doing it. But what Thomas and Philip both ask about is *knowing* where, *knowing* the way, *seeing* the Father. They ask about *knowing* in the Hebrew sense of a real, rich, personal, direct, and intimate relationship. And Jesus replies, essentially, “*In some ways, you really don’t know me, do you?*” **But see Jesus’ kindness here too! Even now, know me – and trust me!**

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. In what ways have you trusted your ability to follow Jesus? In what ways could you shift your hope more onto his ability to come get you – despite your failures?
3. Which kind of failure(s) do you most identify with (Judas, Peter, Thomas/Philip)? Why? What does this text say to you about what Jesus may be saying to you about that issue? After discussing, take some time to pray – asking forgiveness in any way needful, and for restoration through Jesus' kindness.
4. Knowing that the Greek word translated “believe” is strongly centered on personal trust, go back and read out loud John 14:1-4, saying the word “trust” each time you see the word “believe”. Hearing this, how might that affect how the disciples might understand or feel about verses 1-4? How does it change how you feel/understand Jesus' words in verses 1-4?
5. Now do the same for verses 14:9-14, saying the word “trust” or “trusts” each time you see “believe/believes”. How does this change how you understand or feel about “knowing” Jesus, and about what Jesus says in these verses?

## NOTES:

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## PART 29 | REFRAMING OBEDIENCE

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By James Kumin - Kirkland, WA

<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,  
-John 14:15-16

### John 14:15-31

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Judas (not Isacriot) asks a perfectly reasonable question here: *how is it that you will show yourself to us, but the world won't notice? What's the superpower involved here?* Jesus' words here utterly transform any philosophical aspiration in a so-called “search for God”. : that love for Jesus + keeping commandments = Jesus showing himself to us.

As Richard Phillips puts it, “God’s plan never envisioned winning over a hard-hearted unbelieving world with overwhelming audiovisual displays. Rather, he planned to redeem a people for himself. A people who...would love him in holiness that he might [live] in their hearts in love.”

- When we see the beauty of nature, when our hearts are drawn not just to the sunset, not just to the mountain, when our affections go not just to the sea...but our love and affection go also in thanks to Jesus himself – **that is** Jesus showing himself to us (and not to the world).
- When we're with our friends, our family, and our thoughts and affections go not just to them, but also go *to Jesus*...never diminishing our love for others but even more to Jesus than to them – **that is** Jesus showing himself to us.
- When we come to a decision, and the words of scripture flash through our minds, and we *love his word and keep his word* – **that is** Jesus showing himself to us.
- And yes! One day faith will be sight – when all things are made new, this will be (for us and for Jesus) flesh and blood reality. In the new heavens and new earth both Father and Son will fully and visibly make their home with redeemed humanity.

But even now, whenever and however we feel our hearts drawn to Jesus and to his words – *that **is** Jesus himself, personally, making himself known to us.* And the end result of this treasuring of Jesus and his words to us is a complete re-weaving of our lives.

*He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and show myself to him*” – a statement that is bookended by the Father and Jesus participating in sending the Spirit *to be with you forever...and be in you.* Our life treasuring Jesus and his words draws us into the life of God himself, reweaving our lives into his forever – a **reweaving summed up in the biblical word “peace” – in Hebrew, shalom.**

We learn at least four things about this peace, this re-created wholeness we are given as we treasure Jesus:

- His peace is **personal**: Jesus calls it *“my peace”*. It’s wholeness entirely wrapped up in knowing and loving Jesus himself.
- His peace is **joyful**: *“If you loved me, you would have rejoiced”*, says Jesus. Hard and heavy things will come. Guaranteed. But our foundation stands: joy in knowing and being known by God.
- His peace is **enduring**: it comes from Jesus who endured through death itself!
- His peace is **given**: *“My peace I give to you.”*

As long as we’re looking for “proofs” of God, we’ll miss him. But when we let our guard down and look for a Friend and a Father? We’ll find him. We’ll see him. And Jesus and the Father will come and make their home with us. Now by the Spirit And one day in the earth made new, arm in arm and face to face.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. When have you experienced Jesus showing himself to you in your love and obedience for him? Take some time to pray in thanks (and ask for more)!
3. When have you seen your life “rewoven” as you have begun to treasure Jesus and keep his word precious?
4. What new steps into delighting and treasuring him is he inviting you into today?
5. Now do the same for verses 14:9-14, saying the word “trust” or “trusts” each time you see “believe/believes”. How does this change how you understand or feel about “knowing” Jesus, and about what Jesus says in these verses?

## NOTES:

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## PART 30 | REFRAMING LOVE AND HATE

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By James Kumin - Kirkland, WA

<sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you.

-John 15:13-14

### John 15-16:4

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You may have noticed a little repetition in Jesus' own words here.

- Abide in me (Jesus)
- Abide in the vine (Jesus again)
- Abide in me (Jesus)
- Abide in me (Jesus)
- not abide in me (Jesus)
- abide in me (Jesus) – and my (Jesus') words abide in you
- Abide in (Jesus') love
- Abide in (Jesus') love
- Abide in the Father's love
- And all this abiding with the final purpose so that "we would bear fruit and our *fruit* should abide"

There's nothing subtle about this: Jesus wants his disciples – and all of us – above all else, to *abide in him*. Rest in Jesus, be connected in Jesus, draw strength and life from Jesus, depend utterly on Jesus.

**Why the repetition?** Because our natural inclination is...to rest in our accomplishments, connect to our friends, draw strength from ourselves, live our lives our own way, and depend on our own brains and know-how – thank you very much! In short, we abide in anything and everything *other* than in Jesus.

One more thing to notice: there are lots of sharp objects here. You remember your teacher telling you not to run with scissors? Not here. **Take a moment together to read over this passage again, and look for all of the "sharp" words, phrases, and images – the "taking away", the "pruning", the "hating" and more.** Got that? But why would God do this?

Well, go back once more, and read 15:1-10.

- {pause}
- **Discuss: what do you learn here about God's purposes in the "sharpness" of life. Any surprises? What do you find difficult in this? What do you find reassuring?**

But the very deepest reason for all this? Go back once more and read 15:11. That is God's purpose. His love. Your joy. In every hateful, painful harm thrown your way by the world, God is plotting for his inexhaustible joy to be in you, and your joy to be full. And let us thank him for that.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Take some time to talk through the 'sharpness' in your life recently, and right now. Listen to each other's stories. Listen, lament. Don't jump into specific speculations about how exactly this or that might be pruning us for joy. Be ok with the pain, with each other.
3. But after you've spent some time sharing, ask this question of yourself and each other: even if I can't see it right now, what is (at least) one way I might see my situation differently if I begin to trust that my pain is not unknown to God. If I accept that the world hated him before it hated me. That Jesus has suffered with us, and suffered with me.

## NOTES:

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## PART 31 | REFRAMING PRESENCE

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*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” -John 16:33*

*“God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.” - C.S. Lewis*

### John 16:4-33

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In my twenty years as a pastor I have counseled people through various trials and losses from the loss of a child to the loss of a spouse to the loss of a parent. In each case the person who has suffered loss must seek for some sort of comfort or consolation. One widow in her grief married a real jerk. She was so hungry for comfort and the presence of another spouse that she was willing to put up with his stubbornness and self-centered addictions because they meant she would not have to be alone.

The disciples of Jesus are now beginning to face their own imminent loss. Jesus is going away. And he wants to prepare them. “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy” (John 16:20). He is talking about his death and burial. His opponents will be happy to get rid of him and they will be rejoicing while his disciples are shrouded in grief. Jesus knows the cross is in his future. But he also knows the grave will give way to his resurrection. That is why their sorrow will turn to joy.

For many believers today this is where they look for comfort and for consolation- the resurrection of Jesus, the promise of our own resurrection, the new heavens and a new earth. This is consoling for sure. But Jesus gives them other comforts as well that many people today sideline or snicker at. The consolation of the Spirit, the Father’s love and his peace.



“I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7). The Helper is the Spirit of Truth. He will guide you into all truth, he will declare to you the things that are to come, he will glorify Jesus and he will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

The Holy Spirit is such a wonderful gift. And yet, because some overly zealous and emotionally manipulative preachers in the past have acted foolishly, people today avoid the Spirit like the plague. But trying to live for Jesus without the Spirit of God it is like trying to bake without an oven. According to verse 7 Life with the Spirit is even better than life with Jesus. Ponder that! Is it because the Spirit can be everywhere at once? Is it because the Spirit will dwell in them while Jesus is only beside them?

Here we are into the mystery of the Trinity. There is only One God and yet within that one God there are three distinct persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The One is three and the Three are one. This is why Jesus can say “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30) and also “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” (John 14:16-18).

Can you see the mystery? The Spirit will “be with you forever” and “**he** will be in you” and yet in the same breath Jesus says “**I** will come to you” The Spirit is Jesus’ presence dwelling inside us. The three are one! So when Philip asks Jesus “Show us the Father” Jesus can say “Don’t you know **me**?” (John 14:8-9). The same Spirit that hovered over the waters of Creation in Genesis 1 now hovers over believers like a hen brooding over her chick hatching new life and bearing his fruit in our character making us loving, patient, kind, gentle, good, self-controlled, faithful men and women.

The second consolation Jesus gives his disciples in the face of his impending death is the Father's love. Meditate on verse 27 "The Father himself loves you" Compare it to John 1:12-13. So many of our anxieties at work and in our homes stem from our need for approval and acceptance. Jesus is telling us that we don't need to fret about those things anymore. We have the Father's love and acceptance and approval through Jesus. We are now the beloved. This is why Jesus can say "my peace I leave with you" What greater peace than to know that the Father loves us, that the resurrection is coming and that the Spirit is here for us offering us very God's presence day in and day out.

This gives us power to not look for comfort and consolation in the things of the world.

## **QUESTIONS:**

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. What other verses in John portray the mystery of the Trinity?
3. How was the Holy Spirit emphasized or de-emphasized in your previous church experiences?
4. Which of the Holy Spirit's activities are you most excited about?
5. How would our community look different if every believer took verse 27 to heart?

## PART 32 | REFRAMING SANCTIFICATION FOR MISSION

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By Christopher Rich - Marysville, WA

*<sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” **John 17:17-18***

*“As future citizens of heaven, Christians must see and avoid the idolatries and injustices of their culture, even as they continue to enjoy its common-grace blessings.” — **Tim Keller, Center Church,***

### John 17

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Jesus is in the garden with His disciples the night he was to be betrayed. This is His final time of communion with God the Father in prayer before His arrest, trial, beating, and execution. His last petition is not only for what he will experience over the next day but as recorded in this chapter, He gives the great High Priestly Prayer for His people to who are being sent on Mission.

***Jesus eyes are towards Heaven FOR His people (v1-10)*** – Jesus has all authority and grants eternal life for all of His people. This life is exclusive with the one true God known and experienced through Jesus alone. Jesus will suffer for His people (who he has been granted) and be gloriously resurrected brining great glory to God the Father.

***Jesus desires our growth FOR His Mission (v11-19)-*** Jesus wants his people to be clean and mature for the purposes of being more effective on the mission of pointing others to eternal life with Jesus. Disciples of Jesus are set apart for mission to the world not separate from the world.

***Jesus seeks our unity FOR God’s Glory (v20-26)*** - While on mission we are to be unified with each other as God the Father and God the Son are in unity. This is for them to both experience and display the glory and love of God in and to the world.

The Gospel that has saved us to eternal life also gives us purpose in this life. We have been saved, and are being sanctified, to be sent to point others to Jesus. This means our growth, sanctification, maturity is not solely for our personal holiness but to be more effective missionaries to a world who is in desperate need of Eternal life that can only be found in Jesus.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Verse 3 lays out what eternal life is. Describe the key components to this life. How is this different than how you typically think of the concept of eternal life.
3. Being in the world but not of the world is a difficult concept to understand and an even harder concept to live out. How is our mission effectiveness impacted when we either live “apart” from the world or “in” the world only? Where do you struggle most? How do you need to engage differently?
4. How does our unity as Christians reflect the unity of God the Father, Son, and Spirit? How does the display of this unity to the world show them the nature and character of our God? What keeps us from being unified in Christ?

**PRAY** – Thank Jesus for being our High Priest who prays for us before our Father. Seek God for wisdom in navigating the tension between being in the world but not of it. Ask the Holy Spirit to put specific people on your heart to share the Gospel with and pray for them to experience eternal life.

**PORTRAITS  
OF  
LOVE  
JOHN 18-21**

## PART 33 | REFRAMING VICTORY

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By Christopher Rich - Marysville, WA

*So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"* **John 18:11**

*"I would rather lose in a cause that will someday win, than win in a cause that will someday lose!"* - **Woodrow Wilson, 28<sup>th</sup> US President**

### John 18:1-27

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Solemn communion with God in a garden has been shattered as conflict enters and crucifixion looms. From a worldly perspective, Jesus ministry and mission to save His people does not appear to be on a path to victory. However, the true nature and outcome of the conflict are not understood by those around Jesus.

***Fighting the wrong battle (v1-11)***- Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested by the guards. Peter see this as a defeat and begins to wage a one man rebellion striking a temple servant out with a sword. Peter is told by Jesus to cease. Jesus will suffer defeat in order to bring victory.

***Anticipating the wrong outcome (v12-18)***- Caiaphas thinks victory for his people is in Jesus death but believed it would lessen His influence, not increase it. Peter goes from zealous rebel to cowardly denier as Jesus apparent defeat could also mean harm for him. Both are partially correct, but both don't understand what true victory is yet to come.

***Proclaiming the wrong verdict (v19-24)***- Jesus has taught publicly but now is being integrated secretly. The defeat of Jesus begins as he goes from arrested to abused. Peter finalizes his denial(s) and any thoughts of leading a glorious rebellion are replaced with shameful personal defeat. ***Victory (over sin, death, opposition to the gospel) is not something we achieve on our own efforts but is something we receive from Jesus work in our place.***

Because Jesus took our defeat on the cross and emerged from the tomb victoriously we can have courage to show other our allegiance to Him in the face of opposition, and confident of His grace when we don't. This means, overcoming opposition to Jesus might look different than we expect. We are not responsible for defending Jesus. Our zeal alone is not enough to win, and our faithfulness alone is not enough to endure.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Peter displays a wide spectrum of responses when confront about Jesus. When have you responded with either overzealous bravado or quivering cowardice when engaging with other about Jesus?
3. In verse 14 is says the High Priest believed "it would be expedient that one man should die for the people." How is this correct in Jesus? How is this more and/or different than the High Priest intended it to mean?
4. What does it mean that Jesus has bared our defeat so we can experience His victory? **READ 2 Corinthians 5:21** how does this inform our understanding of what Jesus accomplished for us?

**PRAY** – Thank Jesus for being our sinless substitute and sacrifice for His people. Ask God to grant you humility when you are given to prideful conflict and courage to engage faithfully with those who don't know Jesus even when there may be hostility.

## PART 34 | REFRAMING THE VERDICT

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*<sup>37</sup> Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” <sup>38</sup> Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”*

**-John 18:37-38**

### **John 18:28-19:16**

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On one hand, when we come to this passage we are shocked at the horrible turn of events that befall Jesus. On the other hand though, John has been preparing us for this all along. Early in John we read of his opponents plotting against Jesus. (John 5:18; 7:11) In chapter 12 we learn their plot has expanded to target Lazarus as well. And in 16:12 Jesus warns his disciples that “the time is coming when anyone who **kills** you will think they are offering a service to God”

Now we see that these were not empty threats designed to heighten the tension of the narrative and to keep our attention. They were factual. When we think of the deeds or as John calls them “works” of Jesus, we see things that hopefully everyone would be excited about. Healing a blind man is an amazing and beautiful thing. So is feeding the five thousand and raising someone from the dead. So it is not the deeds by themselves that have gotten Jesus into trouble. It is his teaching that has accompanied the deeds.

Before raising Lazarus he claims “I AM the resurrection and the life”(11:23). In a debate at the Temple he says “before Abraham was born I AM” (8:58). To first century Jews these were fighting words. They forced a crisis of decision upon his audience. Some believed Jesus was who he said he was, the I AM, and according to John 1:12-13 they were given the right to become children of God experiencing the same intimacy with the Father as Jesus. But, those who did not believe stood “condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” John 3:18).



As the Jewish leaders hand him over to Pilate we see the end result of their unbelief. They want to get rid of him, to humiliate Jesus and to kill his movement. The underlying motive here must be a sense of fear and insecurity (see John 11:48). The Pharisees felt Jesus was taking the allegiance of the people away from them. They did not want to lose power or control. How many of us today, in the church and outside the church, are also doing our best to keep Jesus at arms length so that we don't have to surrender control. It reveals our unbelief and our alignment with the Pharisees. We are not walking around shouting 'Crucify him' but in our refusal to surrender control that is what we are saying. It is a tragedy of cosmic proportions. And yet Jesus loves us anyway.

The dialogue with Pilate is profound. They talk of kingship and even though Jesus is the prisoner he is clearly in control of the conversation. Jesus continues to speak in such a way that it will only get him in trouble. He says his kingdom is not of this world and that he was born into the world to bear witness to the truth. He does not beg to be released. He carries himself with honor even though he is being treated shamefully by the Jewish leaders.

John is at pains to show Jesus is dying a heroic death. In John 15:13 Jesus says "Greater love has no one than this: to **lay** down one's **life** for one's friends." And in John 10:18 Jesus says "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again." John wants us to see that when they twist together the crown of thorn, put the robe on him, punch him and said "Hail King of the Jews" Jesus is willingly enduring it for the sake of love.

They were seeking to shame Jesus. But by willingly enduring these things for the sake of love, Jesus is what Brene Brown calls "Shame resilient." The shame does not stick and instead Jesus receives honor for all eternity. As in Revelation 5:12 the multitude "In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, **who was slain**, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise."

Jesus could have avoided this by calling on a legion of angels (Matt 26:53) but he chooses to endure it so that we might experience the honor of being so loved.

This is the truth that Jesus, the Son of God came from the Father to bear witness to. The truth that God loves us more than his own life. The truth that our sin can be taken away by the sacrificial blood of Christ. The truth that our shame has been placed on Jesus so that we can experience the honor of being called God's children. As John will write later in his life "what great **love** the Father has **lavished** on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are" (1 John 3:1)

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Why did Jesus insist on teaching such controversial things about himself?
3. What areas of your life are you trying to control instead of surrendering to Jesus?
4. What shame have you experienced that you would like to put on the cross?

## NOTES:

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## PART 35 | REFRAMING DEFEAT

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By Ben Coffin - Redmond, WA

*<sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. - John 19:17-41*

*Behold the Man upon a cross, My sin upon His shoulders.  
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice, Call out among the scoffers.  
It was my sin that held Him there. Until it was accomplished  
His dying breath has brought me life. I know that it is finished  
- Stuart Townend*

### John 19:17-41

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Nineteen and a half chapters have been leading to this moment, and in 2 sentences it is done:

*So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. John 19:16-18 (ESV)*

The Roman soldiers intended for the victim to remain alive as long as possible to make him suffer as much as possible. Often for *days*! Most deaths upon the cross were not due to blood loss or dehydration, but asphyxiation. The criminal would simply be unable to breathe as they hung slouched, with no strength left to pull themselves up on those nails. Sometimes a small seat or platform would be nailed to the cross to hold them up—not to ease their suffering, but to prolong it. The word *excruciating* is Latin for “of the cross.” Yet John doesn’t dwell on the gory details—or on the cross, the *tool* of torture. But he fixes his gaze and ours to the *King* of the cross. The *cross* does not save us, but the King who died upon it! This was not a defeat, but a victory.

The irony continues. Pilate did not *believe* what he had written, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,” and yet his testimony is true! The King who reigns, even from the cross! John continues to show us—as he has throughout the gospel—how Jesus is fully in control. Even from the cross Jesus continued the mission he had left heaven for. He was loving and pursuing sinners. He was drawing all peoples to himself. Even in the midst of his suffering and anguish, he was looking out to those he was dying for. Looking to his mother Mary his friend John (“the disciple whom he loved”) he provided for both of their needs. His mother was losing a son but gaining a Savior. John was losing a friend but gaining a Lord.

As Jesus had promised, he would willingly give his life for the sins of the world (cf., John 3:14-16; 12:32). Though he appeared to be powerless and the one needing saving, Jesus with all power and authority was saving all who would look to him and believe! In an instant, with a final breath, he cried out “It is finished!” I.E., “it is accomplished/completed.” He has fulfilled the law and the Messianic prophecies. He has abolished the curse of sin and death by being hung upon a tree (cf., Galatians 3:10-13). He has accomplished our atonement.

*Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:2*

*“Lifted up was He to die, “It is finished!” was his cry; Now in heav’n exalted high; Hallelujah, what a Savior!” Philip P. Bliss*

The ground is level at the foot of the cross. Our salvation has been accomplished. It is finished! We bring nothing but our faith and worship. Will we look to the King of the cross and bow to him? Or will we ignore the giver of eternal treasure to quibble over pieces of clothing? What a picture of our world, the soldiers. Consumed by the love and pursuit of trinkets that will fade, rot, unravel—which can never satisfy or offer true life—while the one who *can* has arms stretched wide, ready to save us. He even prays “Father forgive them for their blindness!”

May we rightly be grieved and cut to the heart by what Christ has done for us. May we recognize that it should be us upon that cross, but because of love (beyond what we can ever fathom), he has taken our place and instead of death has given us life. Eternal. To the full! May we become his disciples, learning to love like him, give like him, and forgive as he has forgiven us!

*Luke 9:23-25/ <sup>23</sup> And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. <sup>25</sup> For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?*

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. In what ways do you look to the trinkets and treasures of the world to save and to satisfy, other than Jesus?
3. Where do you struggle to trust in the power and control of Jesus over your life? Who is Jesus asking you to forgive?

## NOTES:

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## PART 36 | REFRAMING SUNDAY

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By Matthew Savage - Everett, WA

*<sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). - John 20:15-16*

*"We live and die; Christ died and lived!" – John Stott*

### John 20:1-18

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"I'm pregnant". Those were the words my wife uttered to me two years ago. Now, that may not seem to you like a strange thing for a 30 something husband to hear from his wife. But it was for me. You see, my wife and I had been trying to conceive for 11 years and never once had we succeeded. We had been to countless doctors, taken medication to assist in conception and spent thousands of dollars and not once did we ever conceive. And so after 11 years of trying, as we approached the age of 40, we gave up. We shared our grief with each other and with God and sought to accept his plan for us.

Two months later, while I was getting ready for work, my wife stepped toward me and with a sparkle in her eye said, "I'm pregnant". And for one of the few times in my life, I was speechless. I just stared at her wondering how this could be. After hugging her, I asked "How do you know?" And she handed me a pregnancy test. I was a little self-conscious about holding something she had peed on (germaphobe anyone?) but nevertheless I took it and saw two blue lines. "This means we're pregnant?" I asked in disbelief. This was the best news of my life but it seemed hard to believe. I was looking at evidence of our child's life, but I struggled to believe it. There was evidence of his life, but I could not see

him. I wanted to see our baby to be sure. And 8 weeks later, via an ultrasound, I did.

Before John saw the resurrected Jesus he believed. He didn't need to see Jesus to believe. He believed the moment he entered the empty tomb and saw the linen that had been wrapped around Jesus's dead body, now folded neatly in the corner. You see, the resurrection of Jesus caught his disciples and followers by surprise, though it shouldn't have. No less than 3 times Jesus told his disciples exactly what was going to take place (Matthew 16, 17, 20). But they didn't understand. And I can't blame them. God's Anointed murdered by Gentiles and raised from the dead?! I can't say I'd believe that either.

So as Mary arrives at the tomb early Sunday morning she is deeply grieved to see the stone rolled away and Jesus' body missing. Note that, she thought Jesus' body was *missing*, not resurrected. Then she runs to tell Peter and the other disciple (John), who in turn run to the tomb to see for themselves. And upon the three of them entering the tomb and seeing evidence of Christ's resurrection, each of them has a different reaction. Peter marvels (Luke 24:12 Mary weeps (v. 11) with despair. But John sees and believes. But what did he see? He saw the same things the others saw, yet he believed.

The slaughter of Jesus had been so gruesome that it made it nearly impossible for many of the disciples to imagine a resurrection of Jesus's body. Remember, they witnessed Jesus mutilated and killed. Let's not assume too quickly that we would have responded differently. So it is shocking to hear Jesus say a few verses later "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (v. 29).

Jesus's rebuke is clear. There were others, like John, who had not yet seen Jesus, but still believed in his resurrection. And their believing was *more blessed* than the disciples' faith by sight. Why? Because those saints

relied on their eyes of faith more than the eyes in their heads. And faith without seeing is more pleasing to God and produces more joy than merely seeing. This is why Peter, later wrote, “Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9).

Faith is not blind. Faith *sees* a reality beyond what eyes can see, a reality that God reveals to us which is more important and *real* than what we can see with our physical eyes. Today, Jesus is seen only through the inerrant Scriptures and the imperfect testimony of followers whose heart-eyes have opened. This is the blessed kind of seeing that enables us to “walk by faith, not by sight”. Those who believe in Jesus in this age are more blessed than those who have seen him, because believing is true seeing. And it is not eyesight that produces eternal life, it is faith-sight.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Make the case for the bodily resurrection of Jesus from today’s passage.
3. Do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus? What makes you tempted to doubt the resurrection of Jesus?
4. Why is the resurrection of Jesus the lynch pin of Christianity (i.e. the Christian faith)? Could Christianity continue and flourish if Jesus was never raised from the dead? (See also 1 cor. 15:1-28)
5. What is the first thing Mary does when she returns home? Why is Jesus’ resurrection significant and worth sharing with others?



## PART 37 | REFRAMING DOUBT

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By Matthew Savage - Everett, WA

*<sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." - John 20:28-29*

*"If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead." – Tim Keller*

### John 20:1-18

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The resurrection of Jesus is the hinge of history. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead changes everything. There are many critics who would seek to poke holes in the truthfulness of the resurrection. But in the end, that proves difficult to do. If the resurrection of Jesus were being determined in court, the evidence of Jesus's resurrection is overwhelming, indeed impossible to disprove. There is the empty tomb, the testimony of the Roman guards themselves, the 500+ eye witnesses to the resurrected Lord, the Apostle Paul's encounter with Jesus and how else does one account for the creation of and continuing existence of the church?

But some of the most convincing evidence is the transformation of the disciples themselves. As this chapter records, not all the disciples believed Jesus had resurrected even after they saw and heard the tomb was empty. But this doubt was crucified when Jesus unexpectedly joined them as they fearfully huddled locked in a room. Jesus showed the disciples his hands and side and they believed. Then Jesus commissioned them and sent them to declare the reality and truth of his resurrection, making disciples in His Name and equipped them to do this by giving them the Holy Spirit.

In a scene parallel with Genesis, God brings to life their faith by breathing on them. As Adam was animated and brought to life when the Lord God breathed into him, similarly the disciples' faith was brought to new life as Christ imparted the Holy Spirit to them. It is by the Spirit that we too come to faith in the resurrected Christ. And then there is Thomas. Oh Thomas. It's hard to understand why Thomas was so adverse to trusting the testimony of his beloved friends. And yet, Jesus' response to him is nothing short of lovingly pastoral. J.C. Ryle writing of Thomas says, "'It is hard to imagine anything more tiresome and provoking than the conduct of Thomas . . . . But it is impossible to imagine anything more patient and compassionate than our Lord's treatment of this weak disciple. . . .'"

Thomas now stands as an encouraging reminder when we find ourselves hard of believing and short of trusting in the power and purposes of our Lord. Encouraging not only in Jesus' tender response, but also because of what Thomas became. Sadly, Thomas isn't remembered for radically giving his life for Christ (which he did) but is historically associated with doubting Jesus. But we need to learn what happened after he left that room with Jesus. Thomas, along with the other disciples became fierce evangelists. Thomas used the rest of his life to proclaim the triumph of Christ over sin and death and preach forgiveness in his Name. In fact, he traveled farther than all the other disciples, as far as India preaching this good news until his last breath before he was murdered.

The rest of the disciples, formerly trembling, hiding behind a locked door, having received the Holy Spirit, unlocked the door and went into the public square and preached Jesus with boldness. This change from cringing cowards to fearless preachers was permanent. Though far from perfect, never again did the disciples hide for fear of men. The Spirit altered all that. Today the Holy Spirit moves in us, transforming us, taking us first from unbelief to belief. And then commissions us as ambassadors for Christ. God makes his appeal of the gospel through us. We are his vehicle for sharing the good news of Jesus' triumphant resurrection and reconciling work.

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. Is it possible that Jesus was not resurrected and instead the disciples had a group hallucination? Why or why not?
3. How does the resurrection ground us in hope and give us perspective?
4. How can you know that when you face death it is not the end?
5. What role does the Holy Spirit play in our evangelism

## NOTES:

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## PART 38 | REFRAMING RESTORATION

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By Scott Dudley - Bellevue, WA

*He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. - John 21:17*

*"Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm."  
- Winston Churchill*

### John 21

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Nobody knows why. It sounds better than, "I just sliced the ball so badly that it broke the clubhouse window." Whatever we call it, it's both the opportunity and willingness to try again after failure. In life we often have the opportunity for second and third and fourth chances, but sometimes we lack the willingness.

That's how Peter felt after Jesus' resurrection. At the last supper he'd used bold words, basically saying, "Jesus, I'll never let you down. These other disciples might leave you, just look at them, the worthless lot, but not me." But when the big moment came Peter caved like a house of cards denying that he knew Jesus not once, not twice, but three times. If ever there was one moment in his life that Peter wanted to take a mulligan on it would have been the moment when for the third time he said of Jesus, "I don't know him"

But in Peter's feels like a loser, and there are no second chances for losers, so he says, "I'm going fishing." Those may be the loneliest words in the Bible. Do you ever feel that way? You blow it big time in school or at work. You hurt a friend, a spouse, a child. Or you get hurt, and think to yourself, I'm not going to try that again, it's too hard, it hurts too much." I'm going fishing.

But Jesus gives us second, third, infinite number of chances. He shows up on the shore after they have fished all night without catching anything and tells them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. This is a do-over of the first time Jesus and Peter met (Luke 5:1-11). Then Jesus asks Peter three times, "do you love me," so that Peter gets a chance to affirm his love three times, erasing his three denials. Mulligan.

Jesus, however, not only forgives Peter, but restores him by saying "Feed my sheep." In other words, "I know you've blown it, Peter, but I still believe in you, I still trust you and can do great things through you, you are still my man Peter, you are still my man." And it's Jesus' confidence in Peter that fires him up to try again, and, if need be, fail again (and he will), stumbling forward, following Jesus with no loss of enthusiasm

Peter's renewed confidence is based not on what he can do, but on what Jesus has done. Easter is the mother of all do-overs. It's the control-alt-delete of history, erasing every sin, every failure. There is no failure so deep, no shame so severe that God can't bring new life out of it. Not even the grave can hold us, and so there is an infinite number of chances in front of us.

When I first met my wife I had come out of a relationship which ended very painfully. I had resolved not to try again. It was all too painful, and I neither wanted to feel that pain, nor inflict that pain. For two years she kept asserting that she thought we'd be a good couple. I said things like "no, I'm poison to women, go away," and other things that don't usually count as "wooing." Finally she slammed her hand down on the table and said, "here's the thing: I believe in a God of second chances, how 'bout you?" I felt her confidence, not in me or herself, but in God. It gave me courage to give it a try, and 25 years later I am so glad I did. The biggest hurdle had been just getting the "enthusiasm" to try again. Her confidence in God gave that to me. So where have you lost enthusiasm? Where is it hard to pick yourself back up again? What failure do you struggle with? Here's the thing: I believe in a God of second chances, how 'bout you?

## QUESTIONS:

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1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? Did you learn anything new about John? The Bible? God?
2. What makes you feel like giving up?
3. What helps restore you after a loss or a failure?
4. In what way is Jesus saying to you, "feed my sheep?"

## NOTES:

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## Appendix 1 | WORD STUDIES

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By Ben Jimenez - Grays Harbor, WA

### Φῶς – Light

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The word “light” is such an important word in the gospel of John. He uses it 16 times, whereas Matthew and Luke each use it only 6 times, and Mark only once. It traces a very central theme throughout this gospel. John states multiple times that Jesus is the light of the world. Let's look into this word a little closer to get a better idea of what John meant.

**Creation and Light** - In continuing with his connection to the creation account in chapter 1, John links Jesus with the God of creation even further by describing him as “The Light of the World.” Remember Genesis? “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. (Gen 1:1-5)

It is almost as if John is describing a second creation account; a re-creation. Just like the earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep at the time that God created the world, the world was once again full of darkness in need of light at the time that the Word became flesh.

In John's theology, the first century world is also void and covered in darkness and has no hope unless Jesus, the light of the world, comes and brings light to men, exposes the works of men, and lights the way so that those who believe in the light may become sons of light and see where they are walking so that they don't stumble.

But where is John drawing this theme from? As we saw earlier, he wants his readers to see a clear connection between God's creative power and Jesus himself. But the idea of light continues to run through the Old Testament making John's allusion to light even deeper.

**The Deity of Christ-** Another important idea that John wants his readers to see is that Jesus is God. He communicates this by calling Jesus, "the light of the world." In the Psalms, God is linked over and over with light (cf. Ps 27:1; 104:2; 44:3; 4:6; 139:11-12). John, in more than one way, very unapologetically, states that Jesus is God. The proclamation that Jesus is the light of the world should immediately link Jesus with Yahweh in the mind of every Jewish reader (cf. 1 Jn 1:5-7).

**Light Life, and Salvation** - For John, light and life are deeply connected. In fact, in the preface of his gospel he states, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (1:4-5) and life, of course is deeply connected with salvation. These themes, once again are coming from the Old Testament. In Psalm 36, a Psalm that speaks about God's love and salvation, David sings:

"How precious is your steadfast love, O God!...  
For with you is the fountain of life;  
In your light do we see light (vv. 5, 9).

In John's gospel, to believe in the light and to walk in the light is equal to having life; and to have life is to have salvation. There is only salvation in the light of the world. Apart from him, there is only darkness, night, emptiness, damnation.

**Light, sanctification, and eschatology-** For John, and for Jesus, of course, light also has a lot to do with the way people live. Light exposes the works of people (cf. Jn 3:19-21). Those who do evil works hate light because the light exposes their behavior. But those who do what is true come to the light so that it is obvious that their works are being carried out in God. If we want to live a life of holiness, the key is to walk in the light. The key is to let Jesus, the light, shine on us and reveal to us what is evil so that



he can deal with it. He shines on our path, in him we live as in the day getting rid of the passions of the flesh. When we follow him, we do not stumble because we are able to see the way.

Jesus tells his disciples that they have to walk in the light. But he also tells them that he will eventually leave the world. So they need to take advantage of his presence and walk while they have the light. When he leaves, it will be night. He, however, gives them a solution; “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light” (cf. Jn 12:35-36). Jesus is gone. It is night, the night is advanced, Jesus is coming and the day is at hand once again. But in the meantime, our hope is to believe in the light so that we can be children of light. Our hope is to put on the armor of light; to put on Jesus himself (cf. Rom 13:11-14).

“When [Jesus, the] light comes, it not only makes sin plain as foreign and ugly to what God has made, but it also enables us to see everything good in its true light. Without the light of Jesus, you don’t see anything the way you should see it” (John Piper).

## **Abide, remain**

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One of John’s most used words is “abide.” In fact, out of the 118 times that this word show up in the New Testament, 60 are in any of John’s writings and 40 of them are in his account of the gospel.

The word has a wide range of meanings. Here are a few:

“To persevere, to remain, endure, to await, to stay on, with, staying, place to stay, to hold out, wait on, patience, endurance” (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament).

In John’s gospel the word sometimes means to stay or remain in one physical place. In 1:38-39, for example, two of John’s disciples want to know where Jesus is *staying*. But as it is often the case with John, words don’t just *simply* mean something; especially words like abide, which is

so characteristic of this gospel. So perhaps, as Don Carson has suggested, “it may well be the Evangelist again assigns more symbolic depth to the question than the Baptist’s disciples could have intended at the time.” In other words, when they asked him where he was staying, they only had his lodging place in mind but when Jesus answers them, “come and you will see,” it seems to be a deeper invitation to see that Jesus is remaining with the Father and he can also remain in them if they believe in him (cf. Jn 6:56; 14:10, 17).

At other times in the book, John would talk about Jesus physical location and add the detail that he remained or stayed there. Once again, the reader would do good to not ignore this information as trivial details. There is a reason John is including that detail.

**The Word of God abiding in people** - Jesus teaches several times that the word of God must abide in people. In one occasion he exposes the Jewish people stating that the Word of God does not abide in them. The reason is that they do not believe in the one whom God has sent, that is; Jesus (cf. Jn 5:38). This reminds us of David and Joshua (cf. 119:11; Jos 1:8-9) “who hid God’s words in their heart meditating on it learning not to sin against God, understanding that divine blessing in their lives was vitally dependent on the indwelling of this word. Since Jesus is the very word of God (1:1), and the Jews have no time for him, it follows that they share neither in the experience of nor the blessings upon Joshua and the psalmist” (Don Carson, Pillar Commentary).

On a different occasion he tells his disciples that in order to truly be his disciples they must abide in his Word (8:31). If they want to avoid the same pitfall that the Jewish leaders fell on, they must abide in his word. John 15 is the section that talks about abiding the most, and we will get to it in a bit. In the meantime, let us notice that Jesus once again states that the disciples are to remain in his words.

**Abiding and the Trinity** - John's work is full of allusions to the Trinity. The word abide is an important one when understanding the Trinity. The very first time the word abide appears in this gospel is after Jesus is baptized and the Holy Spirit descends and *remains* on him (1:32-33). Jesus does not do things of his own accord. His ministry is not autonomous. His ministry is by the Holy Spirit. He not only descended on him but remained with him for the duration of his ministry on earth.

Not only the Spirit abides in Jesus, but Jesus abides in the Father, and the Father abides in him, and everything Jesus does and says is from the Father (14:10).

There is a clear fellowship among the persons of the Trinity. They don't do anything apart from the others. Now, when we get to John 15, is when things get crazy!

**Abiding in Jesus and fellowship with the triune God** - John 15 is a tremendous passage that teaches dependence on Jesus. Apart from him we can't bear fruit. The only way to bear fruit is to abide in him just like a branch of a vine must abide in the vine if it wants to produce anything.

One of the greatest concepts of abiding is the result of abiding in Jesus. The Spirit abides in Jesus and the Jesus abides in the Father, when we abide in Jesus, by abiding in his word, we are brought into this triune bliss.

The Spirit will now dwell in the disciples (14:17), and through Jesus, the disciples will abide with the Father and just like Jesus did the works of his Father, the disciples are now empowered to perform the works of the Father in Jesus' name.

## Appendix 2 | RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

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### BOOKS – NOTES

- *The Gospel According to John* | D.A. Carson
- *John* | William Hendriksen
- *John (Baker Series)* | Andreas J. Kostenberger
- *Gospel of Glory* | Richard Bauckham
- Tim Mackie's Teaching Notes for Seattle Area Pastors Network | <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/p3pern8jtsdsizb/AABKzbQVvlqvYuac arCUA2twa?dl=0>

### SERMONS

- *Eating with Jesus – John 21* - Tim Keller | <https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/eating-with-jesus-5123/>

### VIDEOS

- **Read Scripture: John 1- 12** | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-2e9mMf7E8>
- **Read Scripture: John 13-21** | [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUFh\\_wOsauk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUFh_wOsauk)
- **Seattle Area Pastors Training with Tim Mackie** | <https://vimeo.com/261228164>

## Appendix 3 | CONTRIBUTORS

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Christopher Rich | Damascus Road Church | Marysville, WA

Dave Parker | Eastside Christian Fellowship | Kirkland, WA

Paul Dean | Soma Eastside | Issaquah, WA

Rich McCaskill | Soma Eastside | Issaquah, WA

Scott Dudley | Bellevue Presbyterian | Bellevue, WA

Ben Jimenez | Kaleo Grays Harbor | Grays Harbor, WA

Nathan Cedarland | Kaleo Grays Harbor | Grays Harbor, WA

Jim Fikkert | Communion Church | Mount Vernon, WA

Ben Coffin | Union Hill Church | Redmond, WA

Will Forrest | Summit Life Church | Issaquah, WA

James Kumin | Inglewood Presbyterian Church | Kirkland, WA

Matthew Savage | Journey Church | Everett, WA

Aaron Bauer | Issaquah Christian Church | Issaquah, WA

Aaron Gray | Sound City Bible Church | Shoreline, WA





