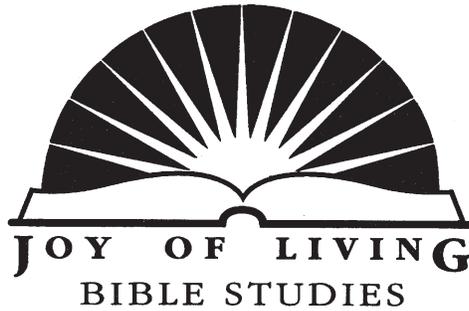


Gospel of John

Lesson 1



Introduction to John's Gospel

We are about to begin a study of the New Testament book of John, but you will also need an Old Testament, as the two testaments are inseparably intertwined in their message to us. The Old and New Testaments mesh together to give us God's complete Word: *His Story, God's Story*.

The Bible contains sixty-six books written by forty authors, as the Holy Spirit inspired them, and it was all recorded over a period of 1600 years. The Old Testament was recorded in the Hebrew language with a few short passages in Aramaic. Then about 100 (or more) years before Christ's appearance on earth, it was translated into the Greek language. The New Testament was recorded in Greek. Our translations have all been from these original languages.¹

1. Adapted from *What the Bible is All About*, by Henrietta Mears. Published by Regal Books. Used by permission.

We suggest that you use the New International Version (NIV) for this study, as the daily study questions are based on this translation. You may, of course, enjoy reading and comparing other versions as you study. We would suggest that you underline favorite verses in your Bible as you find them.

The books of the Bible were written by divinely chosen men in known and existing languages and were accepted as God's Word by the people of that generation. The writers possessed certain qualities which showed the believers of that day that they were from God. During the period that followed the death of the apostles, many books appeared that claimed to have been written by them. While these books never gained universal acceptance, they did bring some confusion to the early Christians. For that reason a church council, toward the close of the fourth century, laid down a number of rules by which

every book claiming inspiration would be measured.

A book had to meet many requirements. Among other things it was necessary (1) that an apostle had either written it or confirmed it; (2) that it had enjoyed universal acceptance from apostolic days; (3) that it had been read in all the churches; and (4) that it had been recognized by the church fathers as inspired. After careful examination it was determined that the New Testament books met the requirements. These twenty-seven books distinctly bore the marks of inspiration and divine authority. Most of them were completed before 80 A.D. This is a significant fact because this time of their writing confirms that the events recorded in the New Testament are the actual historical events of Christ's life on earth and the early church.

God's Miracle Book

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). This is a remarkable and astounding claim which God the Holy Spirit, the Author of our

Bible, makes for the Word of God, the Bible. Truly the Bible has been appropriately called "The Book of Books." It is often referred to as "God's Miracle Book" not only because it records many miracles within its pages, many supernatural acts of the Living God, but also because its very existence and nature are a marvel! No other book in the history of the world has ever been so vigorously and universally attacked by men. Down through the centuries they have tried their best to exterminate it, to wipe out its very existence, and to discredit the written Word of God in every way possible. Yet in spite of all its enemies and critics, the Bible has seen their defeat and frustration!

It was none other than the Frenchman, Voltaire, who said in the last part of the 18th century, that within 100 years the Bible and all Christianity would be completely forgotten. Voltaire died in 1778, but since that time the world has been flooded with millions upon millions of Bibles in scores of languages, dialects, and tongues. It reminds one of a man who built a wall six feet thick and four feet tall. When he was asked why he built the wall thicker than it was high his reply was, "So that when the enemy thinks that he is de-

stroying the wall by tipping it over, he'll only find it stands higher than it was before!" A person might as well try to keep the sun from rising as to attempt to stop the onward march of the Bible.

Led by the Spirit

There has never been any other book which has survived this length of time with such a unity of purpose! The Bible portrays Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord for any who will believe and receive Him. It is amazing that forty authors over a period of 1600 years should have this one theme portrayed in all of their writings. How is this possible? Only as the Spirit of God moved in their hearts and led them to write God's written revelation of Himself could this have ever happened. This book, the Bible, is like a ship that has managed to sail down the river of time safely preserved by God's own hand. Other books have set sail at nearly the same time and have joined the Bible in this sail down the river of time. Some of these books have been shipwrecked in various ways and lost. Others have completely disappeared without our ever having known that they existed. But this is not true of God's Word to us, the Bible. It has sailed safely down this

river of time all the way to us in this present generation. Why has it had such a safe journey? Why has it not suffered a shipwreck or a quiet harbor death? Because it is God's personal message to us. He has preserved this message in the book we call the Holy Bible. He wanted us to know His love for us, and His plan for each of our lives. He preserved the book that shows us this love and these plans for each person He created.

God's Covenant Promise

You will be interested that the word "testament" means a covenant, an agreement and a promise. The Old Testament is the covenant promise that God made with man about His *salvation* (the saving of man from the power and effects of sin, according to Webster's dictionary). This was before the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth. The New Testament is the agreement that God made with man after the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth.¹

The *Old Covenant* or promise stated simply was that God required a sacrifice to be made for sin in anticipation of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Therefore the plan was that the priest, by faith in

1. Adapted from *What the Bible is All About*

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God's promise, would kill a lamb in the temple for a sin offering and present the blood for the forgiveness of the sins of the people.

The *New Covenant* is that the Lord Jesus Christ, in fulfillment of God's promise, came as the Lamb of God to earth and shed His blood for sin. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28—the Lord Jesus Christ's own words). "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29—John the Baptist's words concerning the Lord Jesus Christ).

The Bible speaks primarily of God and secondarily of man. God is the subject of the Bible, man the loving object! The Bible tells us of what God has done and what man has received. It speaks of God's glory, creation, power, love, grace (*God's Riches At Christ's Expense*), mercy, judgment, goodness and patience. The Bible reveals to us that God is love! "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The words of the Lord in the Bible "are more precious than gold, than

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much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb" (Psalm 19:10). We might compare the Word of God to a mine that gives up the precious metal only after careful searching. If you are willing to search the Bible through this daily study plan and obey it, you'll discover the precious promises of God which are better than "pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb."

Life-changing Power

The amazing story is told of what happened on Pitcairn Island. Perhaps you remember the true story of *Mutiny on the Bounty*. After the mutineers scuttled the *Bounty*, some British sailors, some native men and women, and a few children went ashore on Pitcairn Island. It was not long before one of the sailors discovered a way of distilling alcohol, and soon Pitcairn Island became a veritable hell of drunkenness, vice and murder. One day Alexander Smith, rummaging through one of the ship's old trunks brought ashore from the *Bounty*, found a Bible. He began to read it and his life was changed by Jesus Christ. He began to read it to the others and their lives were changed. Years later, when the United States

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ship, the Topaz, landed at Pitcairn Island they found a community of Christian people! It was a community without drunkenness, without profanity, a place where God was worshipped and where His commandments were obeyed. It was a model Christian community, all the result of the finding and reading of the Word of God, the Bible, which revealed Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

In any society, God speaks to men and women through the Bible. A chieftain on a Fijian island said to a visitor, "Do you see that rock over there? That's where we crushed the skulls of our captives in past generations. Do you see that place over there? That's where we built our fire and roasted our victims. Had it not been for the missionaries coming to us with the Bible, you wouldn't get off this island alive. Your head would be crushed. You would be roasted, and my people would serve you at a banquet!" The Bible has transformed lives of drunkards and drug addicts. It has turned cannibals into peaceful men with a respect for human life. It has changed atheists into humble believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even people of wealth and position, who have "every-

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thing" yet "nothing," have found faith and purpose in Jesus Christ through reading the Bible. Jesus Christ has entered the lives of desperately unhappy people to give a meaning, purpose and a blessedness to their lives that they never dreamed possible. As the Bible reveals the Lord Jesus Christ to us, we discover our peace and joy in Him. "Look around and be distressed; look within and be depressed; look to Jesus and be at rest!" (Corrie ten Boom)

Background on the Book of John

Now for a little background in the book of John before we begin our study. John portrays Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Although he does not identify himself by name, John refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved... who testifies to these things" (John 21:20,24; see also 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7.) The early writers who speak of the Gospel of John identify the author as "the beloved disciple," the apostle John, the son of Zebedee. Mark 1:19-20 gives us information about John's family. John, his father, Zebedee, and his brother, James, were fishermen on the lake of Galilee and were partners of Simon Peter (Luke 5:10). The two brothers were called "Boanerges"

meaning "Sons of Thunder" by Jesus in Mark 3:17. It is believed that their mother was Salome (Mark 15:40; Matthew 27:56). John, referring to himself in this Gospel, is with Peter in every instance except at the cross in John 19:26. After Pentecost, John was associated with Peter in Jerusalem (Acts 3:1-4) and also on the Samaritan missions (Acts 8:14-25). Paul spoke of John as one of the three "pillar" apostles that he saw on his visit to Jerusalem after he became a Christian (Galatians 2:9-10).

John states that the purpose of his book is to show that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah (for the Jews), and the Son of God (for the Gentiles), and to lead believers into a life of spiritual friendship with Him. This is stated firmly in the first 18 verses of John called the Prologue.¹

The theme of John's Gospel is the deity of Christ. More here than anywhere else His divine Sonship is set forth. In this Gospel we are shown that the "babe of Bethlehem" was none other than God's "one and only Son" (see John 3:16). John gives evidences that "through him all things were made," and "in him was life," yet He "became

1. Adapted from *What the Bible is All About* (the source of this and the next three paragraphs).

flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:3,4,14). No man could see God; therefore Christ came to reveal Him. This is the message of the book of John.

Only John calls the Lord Jesus Christ "the Word." John also refers to Him as the Creator; "the Lamb of God;" God's "one and only son;" and the revelation of the great "I AM" (see John 1:1-3,29; 3:16; 8:58; Exodus 3:14).

John may have been about twenty-five years of age when Jesus called him. He had been a follower of John the Baptist. In the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96), John the Disciple was banished to Patmos, but afterwards he returned to Ephesus and became the pastor of that wonderful church. He lived in that city to an old age of about 96, the last of the twelve apostles. During this time he wrote his Gospel concerning the deity of Christ, co-eternal with the Father.

John wrote nearly a generation after the other evangelists, somewhere between 80 and 100 A.D. All of the other New Testament books had been completed except for his own writings. The life and work of Jesus was well known at this time. The Gospel had been preached; Paul and Peter had suffered martyrdom, and all the other apostles

had died; Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Roman legions under Titus in 70 A.D. The books of Matthew, Mark and Luke were written. Already false teachers had arisen denying that Jesus Christ was the Son of God come in the flesh. John, therefore, wrote emphasizing those truths and gave the names of the witnesses, and recorded the words and works of Jesus that revealed His divine power and glory.

Matthew portrays the Lord Jesus Christ as “Son of David” and Luke portrays Him as “Son of Man.” In John, He is portrayed as “Son of God.” The Lord Jesus Christ’s deity is emphasized by John. Jesus is shown dwelling with God before creation was formed (John 1:1-2). He is called God’s “one and only Son” (John 3:16). He is called the “Son of God” (John 1:34). Over thirty times Jesus speaks of God as “my Father” in the book of John. Over twenty-five times He says, “I tell you the truth”—speaking with authority.

Keys to John’s Gospel

Dr. F.D. Gordon suggested, “There are three keys that unlock John’s Gospel.” The “Back Door Key” is John 20:31, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,

the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” The “Side Door Key” is John 16:28. At the last supper with his disciples, Jesus reveals this truth to them: “I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.” His constant thought was that He used to be with the Father. He came down to earth on an errand and stayed for 33 years. He would go back again to His Father. The “Front Door Key” is John 1:12. *This key hangs right at the very front, outside, low down, within every person’s reach!* “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” *This is the Great Key—the Chief Key to the whole house. Its use permits the front door to be flung wide open. Anyone who believes may enter!*¹

And so we open the book of John with this question— What do you think of Christ? Is He only the world’s greatest teacher or is He actually God? Was He one of the prophets, or is He the world’s Savior whose coming was foretold by the prophets?² You may have some of these questions in your own

1. *What the Bible is All About.*

2. *Ibid*

mind. We suggest that you bring your doubts one by one to the Lord Jesus Christ as you study the Bible, and one by one God will deal with your questions through His Holy Spirit as you study and obey His Word, the Bible. You will begin to realize that Christ is a living Person, though invisible. As you trust Him, you will begin to experience His love for you and His desire to help you in your life here on earth, as well as His promise to give to you the gift of eternal life as you trust Him as your Lord and Savior (see John 3:16,17).

A Daily Appointment With God

Make a daily appointment with God. Find a quiet spot. Take your Bible, pencil or pen and your lesson with you. If you have a busy phone, you may have to remove it from the hook, turn off the ringer or hide the phone under a blanket to muffle the ringing! Remember how very important your appointment with God is and *make time to be with Him daily*. Ask yourself the following things:

1. How much time will I spend with the Lord each day?
2. What do I need to put aside in order to spend this time with the Lord? (Examples: sleep, television, casual telephone conversations, window shopping, etc. Each person will have to decide what his or her priorities are and what can be removed from the daily schedule to make time to spend with God.)
3. What is the *best time* for my appointment with God?
4. Where is the *quietest* place for me to pray and study?
5. Do I really want to spend time with God? (If your last answer is "yes," God will bless you as you work out the time. If your last answer is "no," pray that God will give you a desire, a hunger to spend this time with Him. He will do this for you!)

Study Questions

Before you begin your study this week:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on the Introduction to John.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Introduction to John, or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?
2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).
3. Personal: Have you chosen to take up the challenge to give daily time to this study and to God? What has God shown you that you could do or give up in order to spend time with Him in study and prayer? (Share if possible with your group, as it may help someone else.)

Second Day: Read all of John 1, concentrating on verses 1-5.

1. a. Comparing John 1:14 with John 1:1 you will discover that “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” Thus the “Word” is the Lord Jesus Christ. What does John 1:1 tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ?

- b. What part of John 1:1 is repeated in John 1:2 and why do you think it is repeated?
- c. Who created all things? (See John 1:3.)
2. Challenge: How does God refer to himself in Genesis 1:26 which confirms what John 1:1-2 says about the “Word”, the Lord Jesus Christ?
3. What do the following verses say concerning the Lord Jesus Christ? Put the verses into your own words if you wish.
Colossians 1:16-17
- 1 John 1:1
4. How does John 1:4 emphasize what the Lord Jesus said about Himself in John 14:6? What significant word do you find in both verses?
5. a. What does the Lord Jesus say about Himself in John 8:12?
- b. Personal: Do you have the “light of life?” A person receives this “light of life” by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. See Titus 3:5,6.
- c. What does Acts 4:12 say which emphasizes what the Lord Jesus said in John 14:6?
6. Challenge: What do you believe John 1:5 means?

Third Day: Read John 1, concentrating on verses 6-14.

1. a. Who was the man sent from God? (See John 1:6.)
b. Why did God send him? (See John 1:7.)
2. How does John 1:10 re-emphasize John 1:3 and John 1:5?
3. Challenge: What do you believe John 1:11 means?
4. To those who are willing to receive Jesus Christ, what right is given according to John 1:12?
5. Personal: Have you ever received this right? See 1 John 5:13. What does it say concerning belief?
6. a. What new or important things do you learn about the Lord Jesus Christ in John 1:14?
b. Challenge: If you do not know what the word “grace” means in John 1:14, look it up in a dictionary or a Bible dictionary. What do you believe God’s “grace” means?

Fourth Day: Read John 1, concentrating on verses 15-28.

1. a. What was given through Moses? (See John 1:17.)
b. Challenge: What does Hebrews 10:1-4 say concerning the law? Summarize these verses in your own words if possible.

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- c. What was offered once and for all time for our sins according to Hebrews 10:10?
2. According to John 1:17, what was given by Jesus Christ?
3. What special place did the Lord Jesus have with the Father before He came to earth as the God-Man to bring us truth and grace? (See John 1:18.)
4. How did John compare himself to Jesus Christ when the religious leaders questioned him? (See John 1:19-28.)
5. Challenge: How do the following verses describe Christ as Ruler and King over all humanity? Try to put them into your own words.
- Philippians 2:9-11
- 1 Peter 3:21b-22
6. a. Personal: Have you received the Lord Jesus not only as Savior but as the Lord and King of your life?
- b. How do you believe a person can allow Jesus Christ to be the “Lord” and “King” of his life? See John 12:26 and Romans 12:2 to help you think about this question.

Fifth Day: Read John 1, concentrating on verses 29-34.

1. When John saw the Lord Jesus, how did he describe Him in verse 29?

2. How does John describe how he saw the Spirit descend on Jesus Christ? (See John 1:32.)

3. According to John 1:33 what did John baptize with and what does the Lord Jesus baptize with?

4. What do the following verses say concerning the Holy Spirit? Put them into your own words if possible.

1 Corinthians 12:13

Ephesians 1:13

5. How does Romans 14:17 describe the kingdom of God?

6. What other name does John give to Jesus Christ in John 1:34?

Sixth Day: Read John 1, concentrating on verses 35-51.

1. a. What did John the Baptist again call the Lord Jesus in John 1:36, which he had already called Him in John 1:29?

b. What was the result of John's words about Jesus Christ? (See John 1:37.)

c. What invitation did Jesus extend to these two in John 1:38-39?

d. What was the name of one of these men? (See John 1:40.)

2. a. What did this man do after he had met the Lord Jesus Christ? (See John 1:41-42.)

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- b. Personal: Have you ever followed the Lord Jesus Christ by faith as this man did? Have you gone out to tell someone else about Him as this man did?
- c. What are ways a person could introduce someone to Jesus Christ today?
3. What new name did the Lord Jesus give to Simon, and what other facts did He give about Simon which shows that He knew all about him before Andrew brought him? (See John 1:42.)
4. a. Whom did Jesus call to follow Him in John 1:43?
- b. What did the Lord Jesus say to Nathanael which showed that Christ already knew all about him before He saw him? (See John 1:47-48.)
5. How did Nathanael declare his faith in the Lord Jesus? (See John 1:49.)
6. Challenge: These men had recognized Jesus as the Messiah whom Moses and the other prophets had written about. How do the following verses from the Old Testament foretell the coming of the Lord Jesus?
- Jeremiah 23:5
- Job 19:25