

got life?

How John's
Gospel leads to
truth and faith
in an age of
cynicism and
doubt



A Bible Study by Stan Key

—Answer Guide—

Volume II



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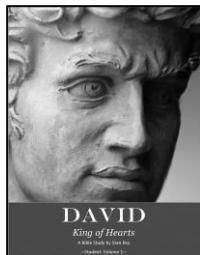
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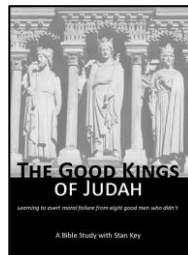
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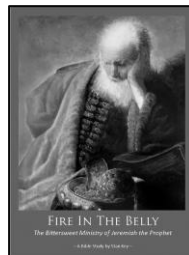
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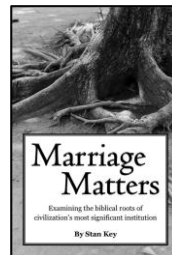
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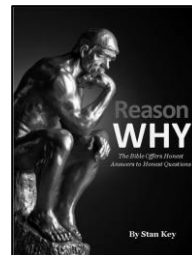
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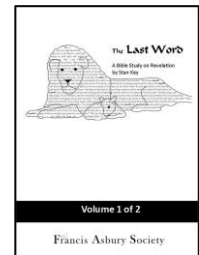
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The Gospel of John A Bible Study with Stan Key

WHO'S YOUR DADDY?¹

John 8:1–59

I. Like Father, Like Son

A. In the image of **God**.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve reflected the image of their Creator. They were thus holy and good. *Like Father, like son.* When they sinned, this image was not destroyed, but it was severely **damaged**.

B. In the image of **Adam**.

When Adam had a son, he bore the image of his earthly father. *Like father, like son.*

*When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God....When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after **his image**, and named him Seth. (Genesis 5:1–3)*

This means that **all** of Adam's descendants have his spiritual DNA. They are born with a **depraved** nature, a heart **bent** on sinning, an **incapacity** to see the truth, and an **inability** to choose the right. *Like father, like son.*

- “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every** intention of the thoughts of his heart was **only** evil **continually**” (Gn 6:5).
- “The heart is **deceitful** above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9).
- “For out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander” (Mt 15:19).

C. In the image of **Satan**.

Upon reflection, one realizes that the situation is even **worse!** Because Satan is the “father” of the original sin Genesis 3, we discover that our spiritual heritage goes back further than the sinful Adam and Eve! Our real spiritual father is the devil! In the Genesis account, two characteristics of Satan are highlighted:

1. He is a **liar**. God said that if Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit they would “surely die” (Gn 2:17). The **first** words of the serpent reveal his character:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast.... He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God

¹ “Who’s your daddy?” is a slang expression used in a wide variety of contexts, usually with a boastful claim of dominance over the intended listener:

- Music—“The Zombies” (1968) song “Time of the Season” (“What’s your name? Who’s your daddy?...”)
- Movies and culture—Denzel Washington, in “Remember the Titans,” uses the line to show dominance over two athletes.
- Sports—Duke basketball of the 1990s, Indiana basketball (“Hoosier daddy?”), Pedro Martinez 2009 World Series, etc.
- Video Games—“Who’s Your Daddy?” is the title of an online multiplayer game.

knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:1–5)

He lies about:

- The **reliability** of what God has said: “Did God actually say...?”
- The **accuracy** of what God has said: “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden.”
- The **consequences** of sin. “You will not surely die.”
- The **character** and intentions of God (he implies God has sinister motives). “...your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God...”

2. He is a **murderer**.

Because Satan knew that the wages of sin was **death** (cf. Rm 6:23), in tempting Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit he was clearly intending to kill them! Furthermore, Genesis 4:1–8 reveals the distinctive fingerprint of Satan in how he inspired Cain to kill his brother. “Sin is crouching at the door” (Gn 4:7; see I Jn 3:12). Satan’s murderous nature means that his intentions with humans is always to: **kill, steal, and destroy** (see Jn 10:10).

D. John 8 helps us to understand who are the children of the God and who are the children of the devil. Discerning who one’s daddy is may be **harder** than you think!

II. Examining the text.

Jesus, what should we do with this woman?	Jesus, who are you and where did you come from?	We aren’t slaves so how can you say we need to be freed?	Abraham is our father but who are you?
Let the one without sin cast the first stone.	I am the light of the world... unless you believe that I Am, you will die in your sins.	Abide in my word... and the truth will set you free.	Your father is the devil...Before Abraham was, I am.
The sin that condemns	The sin that blinds	The sin that enslaves	The sin we inherit from our true father
Jn 8:1–11	Jn 8:12–30	Jn 8:31–38	Jn 8:39–59

Notes on the text:

A. The woman taken in adultery (Jn 8:1–11).

1. Because these verses are not found in the earliest manuscripts of John, most scholars believe that the story was not part of the original gospel but was added later. Even if it is not part of what John wrote, it has the ring of truth and we will consider it as part of the whole.
2. The Pharisees are “testing” Jesus. The real “trial” here is not of the woman, but of Jesus! They have laid a trap: if Jesus opposes her execution then he is soft of Moses but if he supports it he will be usurping Roman law and thus guilty of treason.
3. There is something suspicious about the Pharisees in that the male partner in this illicit liaison is not included in the impromptu trial! According to Moses, he should be executed as well (Lv 20:10).

4. This is the only reference to Jesus writing anything! And it is in sand... thus, it can't be preserved. Though there is much speculation about what he actually wrote², we simply do not know.
- B. The light of the world (Jn 8:12–30).
1. When the words “I am” (*ego eimi*) occur in John, it often has an object: “I am the bread of life,” “I am the light of the world,” “I am the door,” etc. However, on several occasions, the words stand alone, without an object (Jn 4:26; 6:20; 13:19; 18:5–8). Three of these absolute usages of “I am” occur in this chapter:
 - “Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins” (Jn 8:24).
 - “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am” (Jn 8:28).
 - “Before Abraham was, I am” (Jn 8:59).
 2. Though many believe in Jesus (Jn 8:30), it is a shallow faith that will not last (vv. 31, 48, 59). True disciples abide in Jesus’ words (Jn 8:31; cf. Jn 15:4–6; II Jn 9).
- C. The truth will set you free (Jn 8:31–38).
1. The claim that they have “never been enslaved to anyone” (Jn 8:33) is absurd. They had been enslaved on numerous occasions in history (in Egypt, in Babylon, etc.).
 2. How does truth liberate someone? Mainly, by breaking the power of a lie.
- D. You are children of the devil (Jn 8:39–59).
1. When the Jews say, “we were not born of sexual immorality” (Jn 8:41), they may have been making an allusion to Jesus’ questionable birth.
 2. We reflect the nature of our parents. This is true for Jesus (Jn 8:14, 16, 18, 23, 29, etc.). But it is equally true for the people to whom Jesus is talking. Jesus acknowledges their genetic pedigree (Jn 8:37) but shows that their behavior reveals their true spiritual ancestry (Jn 8:39–44). For Jesus spiritual pedigree is more important than genetic descent. Behavior is proof of your ancestry. Origin determines character.
 3. The proper grammatical way to claim pre-existence would have been to say, “Before Abraham was, I was” (Jn 8:59). In using the present tense, Jesus is making a brazen and blatant claim to deity by attributing the Divine Name to himself (see Ex 3:13–14; Isa 43:10).

III. Light on a dark subject.

Though several themes can be traced through this passage (light, truth, fatherhood, witnesses, Jesus’ identity, etc.) our focus will be on the theme of **sin**. The word “sin”³ is used some seven times but the concept is found throughout. This chapter helps us to better understand the **true nature** of sin and more importantly, its **cure**!

A. The nature of sin.

1. Sin is not just based in our actions, but in our **attitudes** (Jn 8:1–11).

² Some suggest he wrote the sins of the accusers. Others suggest he wrote a Bible reference. Other think he was perhaps just doodling, giving time for his words to sink in.

³ Greek, *harmartia* (noun) and *harmartano* (verb): missing the mark.

The woman taken in adultery was “caught in the act” (Jn 8:4). Her behavior made it clear that she was a sinner. However, Jesus sees sin not just in outward behaviors but also in inner attitudes and motivations. Speaking to very religious people he said, “Let him who is without sin among you, cast the first stone” (Jn 8:7). Name the sins of the Pharisees:

- **Pride.**
- **Lustful thoughts.**
- **Lack of love.**
- **Partiality (where is the man?).**
- _____.
- _____.

2. Sinners **don't know** they are sinners (Jn 8:12).

To sin is “to walk in darkness” (Jn 8:12). But the darkness is not caused by the absence of light! The light of the world is here! The darkness is caused by **blindness**. Increasing the brightness makes no difference for one who is blind.

The most important reality to comprehend about sin as darkness is that you can't see what you can't see; you don't know what you don't know. In other words, the most dangerous part of being a sinner is **self-deception** (Jer 17:9). Tax collectors and prostitutes get into the kingdom of God before religious people do (Mt 21:31) not because their sins are “less serious” but because they know they are dirty, rotten sinners! Thus, there is **hope** for them.

3. Sin always leads to **death** (Jn 8:21, 24).

We see this graphically portrayed in how adultery is a capital offense in the Torah. But Jesus is talking to the Pharisees. All sin, like all **cancer**, if left untreated, will ultimately lead to death (Rm 6:23).

4. Sin is a form of **slavery** (Jn 8:31–38).

“Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin” (Jn 8:34; see Rm 6:16; II Pt 2:19). Sin is more than walking in darkness; it is walking in chains! And just as people who are blind don't know they are blind, so people who are slaves don't know they are slaves! “We are the offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” (Jn 8:33).

Cornelius Plantinga⁴ outlines the “Dynamics of Addiction” as a way to help illustrate the slavery that comes from sin:

- a. **Repetition** of pleasurable and therefore habit-forming behavior, plus escalating tolerance and desire.
- b. Unpleasant aftereffects of such behavior, including withdrawal symptoms and **self-reproach**.
- c. **Vows** to moderate or quit, followed by relapses and attendant feelings of guilt, shame, and general distress.
- d. Attempts to ease this distress with new rounds of addictive behavior.
- e. Deterioration of work and relationships, with accompanying **denial**, delusions, and self-deceptions.

⁴ Plantinga, 145.

- f. Gradually increasing preoccupation, then **obsessions**.
 - g. **Compulsivity** in addictive behavior (one's will has become enslaved).
 - h. A tendency to draw others into the web of addiction, people who support and enable the addiction (co-dependents).
5. Sin is a **genetic** issue (Jn 8:39–47).

Sin not only blinds people to their blindness and their bondage, it also makes them unaware of who their **real father** is. The Jews naively believed that *Abraham* was their father (Jn 8:33, 39) and that they were children of *God* (Jn 8:41). But their behavior confirms that, in reality, their father is *the devil*! Two factors make this irrefutable:

*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a **murderer** from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a **liar** and the father of lies. (John 8:44)*

The Jews were seeking to kill Jesus (Jn 8:37, 40, 59). Not only that, they don't believe the truth Jesus is speaking precisely because it is the truth! "*Because (not "although") I tell you the truth, you do not believe me*" (Jn 8:45). Just as the Father in heaven cannot lie, so the devil cannot tell the truth.

B. The cure for sin.

1. When sin is exposed, the overwhelming temptation is to do what Pharisees have always tried to do. These simply do not work:
 - a. **Deny**. "Sin? What sin?"
 - b. Rationalize. "Life's been hard lately, and therefore I..."
 - c. Justify. "My peer group was just pushing me too hard to go along..."
 - d. **Blame**. "If my parents hadn't divorced, then..."
 - e. Deny. "I didn't do anything."
 - f. Practice some form of **behavior modification**.
 - g. Kill the **messenger**.
2. This chapter gives a better way:

- a. Love **the light** and walk in it (Jn 8:12).

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son **cleanses** us from all sin" (I Jn 1:7). The only way to defeat the bondage of a lie is with a **truth encounter**! Only truth can set you free! But this demands humility. The first step to victory over sin is the humble acknowledgment that:

- I am blind and ignorant and **don't know** my true condition.
- I am a slave to sin.
- I am a child of the devil.
- I am a **very good liar**!

- b. **Believe** in Jesus (Jn 8:24, 28).

"Unless you believe that I Am, you will die in your sins... When you have lifted up the Son of Man, they you will know that I am..." (Jn 8:24, 28).

The cure for sin is not behavior modification; but believing in the forgiveness and cleansing that come from the cross where “the Lamb of God **takes away** the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29).

c. Be **born of God**.

The only way to change our genetic code so that the **nature** of Adam and Satan does not dictate our character and fix our destiny is to be born of the Spirit (Jn 3:1–8).

d. **Abide** in Jesus and in his words (Jn 8:31–32, 51).

True faith in Jesus involves much more than mental acknowledgment of certain facts. It means we live in him, walk with him, and keep his commandments.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What did you learn from this lesson about the nature of sin?
2. What did you learn about the cure for sin?
3. If sin makes us blind and deceives us about our true condition, what hope can any of us every have to see things clearly?
4. Is there any sin in your life that is making you a slave? Which of the characteristics of addiction may be present in your life?
5. Is it really possible to change one's spiritual DNA?



Lord, We Are Vile, Conceived in Sin

Isaac Watts

(Sung to the tune of *Sweet Hour of Prayer*)

*Lord, we are vile, conceived in sin,
And born unholy and unclean;
Sprung from the man whose guilty fall
Corrupts his race, and taints us all.
Soon as we draw our infant breath
The seeds of sin grow up for death;
The law demands a perfect heart,
But we're defiled in every part.*

*Jesus, thy blood, thy blood alone,
Hath power sufficient to atone;
Thy blood can make us white as snow;
No Jewish types could cleanse us so.
While guilt disturbs and breaks our peace,
Nor flesh nor soul hath rest or ease;
Lord, let us hear thy pard'ning voice,
And make these broken hearts rejoice.*

*Behold, we fall before thy face;
Our only refuge is thy grace:
No outward forms can make us clean;
The leprosy lies deep within.
No bleeding bird, nor bleeding beast,
No hyssop branch, nor sprinkling priest,
Nor running brook, nor flood, nor sea,
Can wash the dismal stain away.*



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The Gospel of John A Bible Study with Stan Key

HERE'S MUD IN YOUR EYE¹

John 9

I. Blind to the Light of the World

A. A lesson from a cave.

In the darkness of Mammoth Cave, some fish have adapted to their environment by ceasing to grow **eyes**. Obviously, turning on a light will not enable such an animal to see! These eyeless fish help us better understand that two things are required in order to see the truth that is right in front of us:

1. **Light:** even perfectly formed eyes will be useless in the dark.
2. **Sight:** bright lights make no difference for someone who is blind.

B. Philosophy 101.

The branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge is called **epistemology**. It seeks to answer the question: How do we know what we know? Answering this question is challenging because it demands that we think about how we think; that we look at how we look. This is difficult because our eyes can see everything in the universe except—our **eyes!** Thinking about thought is a bit like examining the glasses you wear. We typically look *through* them, not *at* them. Occasionally, however, it is good to take them off and examine them.

C. You can know that you know.

John's Gospel, though **simple** enough for children to understand, has **profound** teaching about epistemology. By examining themes such as the following, one discovers what John has to say about how we know what we know:

- “To know”—The verb *ginosko* is used 56 times and the verb *oida* 85 times.
- “Light”—The noun *phos* is used 23 times in John's Gospel and 6 times in I John (more than a third of its New Testament occurrences). The word “darkness” (*scotia*) is used 8 times in the Gospel and 6 times in I John.
- “Truth”—The noun *alethia* is used 25 times; its adjectival forms, 23 times.
- “To believe”—John uses the verb *pisteuo* 98 times, but not even once does he use the noun.

All of these themes come together in a dramatic way in John 9.

D. God alone can open blind eyes!

It is important to realize that there are **no** stories in the Old Testament about miraculous healings of the blind. This is something only God can do (Ex 4:11; Ps 146:8). Further, there are **no** New Testament accounts of the apostles giving sight to the blind (other than when Ananias restored sight to Paul in Acts 9:17–19). However, there are more stories of Jesus giving sight to the blind than of any other sort of

¹ The phrase “Here's mud in your eye” is sometimes used as a toast, along the lines of “Cheers” or “Good health.” Though it sounds negative, it actually has a very positive meaning. Its origin comes from John 9:6, where Jesus healed a blind man by anointing his eyes with mud.

miracle!² Obviously, opening blind eyes is a powerful **sign** of *who* the Messiah is and *what* he has come to do. The physical healing points beyond itself to a deeper truth.

- E. Chapter 9 plays a pivotal role in the Gospel of John.
1. Its length, level of detail, and the care used in **telling the story** show us its importance in the broader narrative.
 2. It is the ironic and **surprising** conclusion (Jn 9:35–41) that reveals the primary importance of this story.
 - The blind man **sees clearly**, with spiritual as well as physical sight.
 - The Pharisees, who claim to see spiritual truth clearly, are **completely blind**.
 3. The light of the world has come (Jn 8:12; 9:5), and yet many remain in darkness! How can this be? The reason is that light both illuminates and **blinds**. Though its purpose is to enlighten, its presence inevitably causes **shadows**. In other words, the coming of light is the coming of **judgment!**

*So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done so many signs before them, they still **did not** believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” Therefore they **could not** believe. For again Isaiah said, “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.” Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. (John 12:35–41)*

II. Examining the Text

A miracle!	The Neighbors	The Pharisees	The Parents	The Pharisees	Jesus
Who sinned?	How were your eyes opened?	This man is not from God for he does not keep the Sabbath	We don't know how he has regained his sight	We know Jesus is a sinner... and you are too!	For judgment I came into this world
1–6	7–12	13–17	18–23	24–34	35–41

- A. Sight is closely related to **knowledge**. Notice how John emphasizes knowledge in the telling of this story:
1. Three times the former blind man humbly acknowledges his **ignorance**:
 - “Though my physical eyes are healed, there is still much I do not see.”
 - The neighbors ask him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not *know*.” (Jn 9:12).
 - “Whether he is a sinner I do not *know*.” (Jn 9:25).
 - Jesus asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered, “Who is he, sir?” (Jn 9:35–36).

² See Matthew 9:27–31; 12:22; 15:30–31; 21:14; Mark 8:22–26; 10:46–52; Luke 7:21–22; John 9. Old Testament prophecies had stated that the coming Messiah would indeed be able to heal the blind (Is 29:18; 35:5; 42:6–7).

2. Three times, the Pharisees boldly assert their total **confidence**: “We know that we see clearly!”
 - “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath” (Jn 9:16).
 - “We *know* that this man is a sinner” (Jn 9:24).
 - “We *know* that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not *know* where he comes from” (Jn 9:29).

- B. This story lays out the blind man’s **progress** in faith. Beginning from not knowing anything about Jesus to worshipping him as Lord and Savior, the story is a sort of paradigm for growth in discipleship:
 - He refers to the one who healed him as “the **man** called Jesus” (Jn 9:11).
 - When asked specifically about Jesus’s identity, he calls him a “**prophet**” (Jn 9:17).
 - Later, he concludes that Jesus is “**from God**” (Jn 9:33).
 - Finally, he confesses: “I believe [that you are the Son of Man]” and he **worships** Jesus (Jn 9:35–37).

- C. This story begins by raising the question of the relationship between blindness and **sin** (Jn 9:1–4). Both the disciples (Jn 9:2) and the Pharisees (Jn 9:34) assume that blindness is **caused** by someone’s sin (the man or his parents). However, Jesus rejects this causal connection. Notice that while the connection between sin and *physical* blindness is non-existent, the connection between sin and **spiritual** blindness is emphasized!

*Jesus said, “For **judgment** I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains. (John 9:39–41)*

III. Why can’t I see? Why can’t I believe? Why can’t I know the truth?

- A. If you are honestly asking the question, there is **hope**!

The problem is that many don’t ask because people don’t know what they don’t know; they don’t see what they can’t see. The first step toward sight is the **humble** recognition that one is blind. This relates to two very different types of people:

 1. Some are **honestly** blind. They can’t see because they can’t see. For these people, there is great hope.
 2. Some are **willfully** blind. These people have made a choice to reject the light and live in darkness. For these people, time is **running out**. “The light is with you a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you.” (Jn 12:35).

- B. A review of Biblical history can help.

Light has come! The problem is not the darkness but rather our blindness. But God (and God alone!) can still open blind eyes to see the Truth.

 1. When Hagar became pregnant, Sarah dealt harshly with her and she fled into the desert. But the angel of Lord found Hagar and reassured her and blessed her.

*So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," [or, You are a **God who sees me**], for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me" [or, Have I really seen him who sees me?] Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi [the well of the Living One who sees me]; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. (Genesis 16:13–14)*

LESSON: To see, we must first realize that **we are seen!** The cure for blindness begins only when we discover that God is watching over us all the time.

2. Later, Sarah cast out the slave woman Hagar and her son Ishmael. Again, Hagar went into the desert. When her water ran out, she knew she and her son would die, so she "lifted up her voice and wept." God heard her cry and "**opened her eyes**, and she saw a well of water" (Gn 21:15–21).

LESSON: We tend to think that our difficulties in life are caused by God's absence and inaction. Wrong! God has **already provided** the well! But because of our grief, bitterness, and unbelief, we can't see it—until he opens our eyes.

3. Not only are we blind to the blessings of God that are all around us, we are also blind to the **dangers** that threaten our safety and well-being. Balaam's donkey saw what the prophet could not see: an adversarial angel blocking their path.

*Then the Lord **opened the eyes** of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand... And the angel said to him... "I have come to oppose you because your way is perverse before me..." (Numbers 22:31–32)*

LESSON: Spiritual blindness makes us **unaware** of the dangers when we wander from the straight path of truth.

4. When the Syrian army surrounded the city of Dothan, intending to do harm to Elisha, who was trapped inside, the prophet's servant was terrified; "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

*He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please **open his eyes** that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (II Kings 6:16–17)*

LESSON: Spiritual blindness makes us unaware of the **resources** of God at our fingertips. But again, we can see them only when the Lord enables us to see.

5. After the resurrection, Jesus was present with his disciples, but "their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (Lk 24:16). But when he blessed, broke, and shared bread with them, "their eyes were opened, and they recognized him" (Lk 24:31).

LESSON: Before concluding that the difficulties of life prove the **absence** of Jesus, ask God to open your eyes. He may be sitting **at your table!**

6. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things **not seen**.... And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that **he exists** and that he **rewards** those who seek him... These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having **seen them** and greeted them from afar... [By faith Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was

looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as **seeing** him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:1, 6, 13, 26–27).

LESSON: Without faith we simply cannot please God. And faith is the gift of God that makes it possible to see him in **every situation!**

C. **Ask** God to open your eyes; trust him to give you the **gift of faith.**

The problem is not the absence of light but our blindness. Some are innocently blind (like the blind man in John 9). Others are willfully blind (like the Pharisees). But Jesus can open the eyes of anyone who **humbly** comes seeking a divine touch that will enable them to see. But don't delay: night is coming! Those who reject the light will be **blinded** by its brilliance! Those who receive the light will become sons and daughters of light.

*For at one time you were **darkness**, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will **shine on you.**”*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSIONS

1. In this passage, Jesus says that sin is *not* the cause of the beggar's blindness but it is the cause the Pharisee's blindness. Discuss this.
2. The narrative describes the growing faith of the man who had been healed: he believed Jesus was a man, then a prophet, and finally he worshiped him as Lord and Savior. What should we learn from this?
3. What have you learned from this lesson about epistemology? How do we know that we know?
4. Are there areas of your life where you just can't see? Describe those areas. Has this lesson enabled you to “see” something you didn't see before?
5. Think of someone you know who is spiritually blind. How will this study affect the way you think, pray, and witness to him/her?



got life?

The Gospel of John A Bible Study with Stan Key

FINDING THE DOOR

John 10:7-10

I. Looking for the Door

A. It seems that humans have always recognized the **symbolic power** of doors. We find doors used in various religions, in dreams, in architecture, and especially in **literature**. The metaphorical power of this simple symbol is seen when we think about how a door:

1. Gives a **glimpse** of what is on the other side.
2. Provides a **passage** from here to there. It enables you to walk through a wall!
3. May be open or closed; inclusive or exclusive; **shut in** or **shut out**.
4. Indicates that something is either about to **begin** or to **end**.
5. Is typically quite **narrow** and small.
6. Confronts us with an opportunity; a **choice**.
7. Preaches a **sermon** every time we pass through one.

B. Consider, for example, how doors are used in:

1. Shintoism (religion of Japan). The archway is perhaps the primary symbol.
2. The Roman god Janus was the god of doors (beginnings, endings, transitions, etc.). He is usually depicted as having two faces.
3. The story of “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” tells how a poor woodcutter (Ali Baba) discovers a cave full of treasure which is sealed so that the door can only be opened by speaking the magic words “Open Sesame.”
4. An early scene in *Les Misérables* (Victor Hugo) tells how Jean Valjean, just released from 19 years in prison, comes to a village and knocks on many doors looking for shelter and hope. Every door is slammed in his face. In despair, he slumps on a park bench. A woman comes to him and, hearing his story, says, “Have you knocked at that door, there?... Knock there” (11).
5. In the Disney movie *Frozen*, Anna says to Hans: “All my life has been a series of doors in my face and then suddenly I bump into you.” Then she sings, “Love Is an Open Door.”
6. In the movie *Titanic*, Rose is saved by finding a floating door that is just big enough to save her alone. As Jack sinks in death, he makes her promise that she will live a long life and never give up.
7. *The Chronicles of Narnia* are full of doors. The wardrobe is a passageway that leads from England to another world. Perhaps the most powerful portrayal is in *Prince Caspian* when Aslan builds a doorway in a field that appears to lead nowhere. But those who stepped through this door immediately entered another world. In his essay “The Weight of Glory,” C. S. Lewis explains his love for the symbolism of doors.

Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door, which we have always seen from the outside, is no

mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation... At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door... But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get in.”¹

II. The Door: A Biblical History

Nowhere is the imagery of doors more powerful than in the Bible! From the first page to the last, the inspired writers talk about “the door.” Our study will end in John 10:7–10 with Jesus saying, “I am the door.” But to capture the dramatic impact, we must first explore the biblical history of the door.

A. The door (gate, entrance) to the **Garden of Eden**. Genesis 3:24.

In the beginning there was no **wall of separation** and thus, no door. God’s world and man’s world were one and the same (Paradise). Adam and Eve had fellowship with God. But sin created separation and they were expelled from Eden. An angel (cherubim) with a flaming sword was placed at the eastern entrance, making it impossible for Adam and Eve to enter their original home ever again. The **door was shut!**

Point to Ponder: Picture a wall that separates humans from God and our true homeland. Human history is thus lived east of Eden, in the land of Nod (wandering) (Gn 4:16). We are **homesick** but can’t get home because even if we could find the door, the entrance is guarded by angels who are armed and dangerous!

B. The door in **the ark**. Genesis 6:16; 7:16.

God gave Noah specific instructions about the door and when the rains began, he himself shut the door; thus all on the inside were **shut in** (safe, secure, full of hope) and all on the outside were **shut out** (doomed, lost, full of despair).

Point to Ponder: God’s **only** provision for salvation from judgment and the wrath to come was the ark. There was only one door and God determined when it would be shut. The same door that saves is the door that condemns. God’s part in salvation is to provide the ark and open the door. Man’s part is to enter in. “One door and only one, and yet its sides are two / Inside and outside, on which side are you?”²

C. The door at the **Tower of Babel** (Heaven’s Gate). Genesis 11:1–9.

The multinational effort to build a tower “with its top in the heavens” (Gn 11:4) was an impressive effort to reach **heaven’s gate**. The Akkadian name *bab-ilu*, meant “gate of god.” However, God was displeased with such arrogance and confused their speech and ended the futile project.

Point to Ponder: The story of the tower of Babel is meant to be an unforgettable object lesson showing the **futility** of all human efforts to find the doorway that enables us to live in fellowship with God. Those who are brazen enough to claim to be able to reach heaven’s gate by their own noble efforts will invite divine **judgment** and the work will end in **confusion**.³

¹ Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, 36–37.

² A sobering representation of this door is found at The Ark Encounter in Williamstown, Kentucky. Visitors get a graphic feel for what it must have meant to be inside the door—and outside!

³ A tragic illustration is the California cult named “Heaven’s Gate” founded by Marshall Applewhite. On March 26, 1997, 39 members of this cult participated in a mass suicide in hopes that they might reach an extraterrestrial spaceship that was supposedly passing by in conjunction with the Hale-Bopp comet.

D. The door at the top of **Jacob's Ladder** (Genesis 28:10–17)

Jacob's ladder (stairway) succeeded where Babel's tower failed. This stairway was not built by man but **by God** and "the top of it reached to heaven" (Gn 28:12). The angels going back and forth illustrated the mind-boggling possibility of being able to communicate with God! Jacob exclaimed: "This is the **gate of heaven**" (Gn 28:17).

Point to Ponder: Apparently, this stairway to God had always been there but Jacob, in his **blindness** had not seen it: "The Lord is in this place and I did not know it" (Gn 28:16). Note especially how Jesus uses the story of Jacob's ladder to explain to Nathanael both who he is and why he came: "You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending **on the Son of Man**" (Jn 1:51). In other words, Jesus is the ladder, he is the door between heaven and earth, between God and man.

E. The door of the **Tabernacle** (Exodus 25–40)

The Tabernacle was designed by God to **illustrate** how his redeemed people could live in daily fellowship with him. There were actually three entrances (gates, doors, curtains) that led progressively closer and closer to the presence of God.

1. The **gate** into the courtyard (Ex 27:16; 38:18–19). On the eastern side of the fence that surrounded the Tabernacle was a single gate. It was made "of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, embroidered with needlework."
2. The **door** into the Tabernacle (Ex 26:36–37; 36:37–38). The entrance to the Holy Place included five pillars. This was also made "of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, embroidered with needlework".
3. The **veil** that designated the Most Holy Place (Ex 26:31–35; 36:35–36). The massive curtain was also made "of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen" but it had an additional feature: "It shall be made with **cherubim** skillfully worked into it"⁴. Behind this veil was placed the Ark of the Covenant (where the presence of God resided).

Point to Ponder: When Jesus died on the cross, the veil was torn in two, "from **top to bottom**" (Mt 27:50–52). Theologically, this meant that believers now can come boldly into the very throne room of God (Heb 4:14–16).

*Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a **new and living way** opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19–22)*

F. The door to **Ezekiel's Temple** (Ezekiel 40–47; especially 43:4–5; 44:1–3; 47:1–12)

After Solomon's Temple was destroyed, the Lord gave Ezekiel a vision of what the new Temple would look like. The eastern door would remain **shut** because the glory of the Lord had returned! A life-giving, healing river that flows in increasing strength is flowing out from **under the door** of the temple toward the Dead Sea. "There is a

⁴ This was certainly a reference to the cherubim who guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden and the tree of life (Gn 3:24).

river whose streams make glad the city of God” (Ps 46:4; see also Joel 3:18; Zec 14:8; Rv 22:1–2).

Point to Ponder: This passage connects the **door** with **water**! Jesus was very conscious of this connection. Notice how the water that flows under the door increases both in depth and breadth as it flows, though it has no tributaries! Notice how this water both heals and gives life.

G. The Door in **Revelation** (Revelation 4:1–2; 19:11; 21:1–3).

John’s vision of the end of human history includes several doors. He sees a “door standing open in heaven” (Rv 4:1–2). Looking inside, he sees a **worship service** going on of cosmic proportions. When Christ returns in power and glory, he will come through that open door (Rv 19:11) and then “the kingdom of the world [will] become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rv 11:15). As the new Jerusalem descends like a bride adorned for her wedding day, we realize that the wall of separation has **disappeared** and creation and the redeemed are once again united in fellowship with God; a sort of reestablishment of the Garden of Eden. Once again, men and women have access to the **tree of life**.

Point to Ponder: When Christ returns to establish his kingdom on earth, there will be no need for a door because the redeemed are all **shut in** with him in intimate fellowship forever. The only “door” that remains is the one that leads to **hell** (see Rv 1:18; 9:1–3; 20:1–15). The redeemed are “shut in” with God. The lost are on the other side, “shut out” forever.

H. **Jesus** is the door (John 10:7–10)

Jesus not only *shows* the door, he **is** the door! Just as a shepherd lays down to sleep across the entryway of the sheepfold to protect the sheep from thieves and from predators, so Jesus is himself the doorway. He is Jacob’s ladder (Jn 1:51). He is *the* way, the **only** way, and no one comes to the Father except through him (Jn 14:6).

Point to Ponder: Though the way may seem narrow and hard (see Mt 7:13–14), this is the door that leads to **abundant** living (Jn 10:10).

III. Conclusion

- A. There is **a door**. There really, truly is a point of access between this world and the Kingdom of God; between me and God. Though the wall of separation is broad and high, there is a door that enables one to connect with the other side.
- B. The door is **open**. Today is a day of grace and the invitation is given: come inside!
- C. There is **only one** door and it is **narrow** and hard (Jn 14:6; Mt 7:13–14). The “hardness” does not relate to human effort or meritorious good works. No! It is hard because it is hard to accept (see Jn 6:60). The narrow door means I can’t take any baggage or possessions along with me and I must be **small enough** to get it.
- D. The door will one day be **shut**. Jesus told two parables that emphasized the tragedy of coming to the door when it was already shut (Mt 25:1–13; Lk 13:22–30) The decision is urgent. Today is the day, now is the time. What could be more **horrible** and tragic than coming to the door and finding it locked?
- E. Jesus is the door. To **receive** him and to **believe** in his name is what it means to walk through the door (Jn 1:12–13).
- F. The great privilege of **witnessing** is to stand by the door. When Jesus gave Peter (and the church) the **keys** to the kingdom (Mt 16:19), he was commissioning his followers to tell others where the door is! Sam Shoemaker (1893–1963), one of the

co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, wrote a poem that captures the true spirit of witnessing: "I Stand by the Door."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think the imagery of "the door" is such a popular theme in literature and the arts?
2. Which of the doors in our survey of biblical history spoke most deeply to you? Why?
3. Jesus not only shows us the door, he *is* the door! Explain the distinction.
4. Why is it so "hard" to accept that there is only one door and few people find it? Is there any way to soften this reality?
5. How did the poem by Sam Shoemaker impact you? What would it mean for you to understand your role as a witness as someone who stands by the door?



Come to the Ark

By Anonymous (1846)

(Sung to the tune of "O God, Our Help in Ages Past")

*Come to the ark, come to the ark,
To Jesus come away:
The pestilence walks forth by night,
The arrow flies by day.*

*Come to the ark: the waters rise,
The seas their billows rear;
While darkness gathers o'er the skies,
Behold a refuge near.*

*Come to the ark, all, all that weep
Beneath the sense of sin:
Without, deep calleth unto deep;
But all is peace within.*

*Come to the ark, ere yet the flood
Your lingering steps oppose:
Come, for the door which open stood
Is now about to close.*

I Stand by the Door By Sam Shoemaker (193–1963)

*I stand by the door.
I neither go to far in, nor stay to far out.
The door is the most important door in the
world—
It is the door through which men walk when
they find God.
There is no use my going way inside and
staying there,
When so many are still outside and they, as
much as I,
Crave to know where the door is.
And all that so many ever find
Is only the wall where the door ought to be.
They creep along the wall like blind men,
With outstretched, groping hands,
Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a
door,
Yet they never find it.
So I stand by the door.*

*The most tremendous thing in the world
Is for men to find that door—the door to God.
The most important thing that any man can do
Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping
hands
And put it on the latch—the latch that only clicks
And opens to the man's own touch.*

*Men die outside the door, as starving beggars
die
On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of
winter.
Die for want of what is within their grasp.
They live on the other side of it—live because
they have not found it.
Nothing else matters compared to helping them
find it,
And open it, and walk in, and find Him.
So I stand by the door.*

*Go in great saints; go all the way in—
Go way down into the cavernous cellars,
And way up into the spacious attics.
It is a vast, roomy house, this house where God
is.
Go into the deepest of hidden casements,
Of withdrawal, of silence, of sainthood.
Some must inhabit those inner rooms
And know the depths and heights of God,
And call outside to the rest of us how wonderful
it is.*

*Sometimes I take a deeper look in.
Sometimes venture in a little farther,
But my place seems closer to the opening.
So I stand by the door.*

*There is another reason why I stand there.
Some people get part way in and become afraid
Lest God and the zeal of His house devour them;
For God is so very great and asks all of us.
And these people feel a cosmic claustrophobia
And want to get out. 'Let me out!' they cry.
And the people way inside only terrify them
more....*

*The people too far in do not see how near these
are
To leaving—preoccupied with the wonder of it
all.
Somebody must watch for those who have
entered the door
But would like to run away. So for them too,
I stand by the door.*

*I admire the people who go way in.
But I wish they would not forget how it was
Before they got in. Then they would be able to
help
The people who have not yet even found the
door.
Or the people who want to run away again
from God.
You can go in too deeply and stay in too long
And forget the people outside the door.
As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place,
Near enough to God to hear Him and know He
is there,
But not so far from men as not to hear them,
And remember they are there too.*

*Where? Outside the door—
Thousands of them. Millions of them.
But—more important for me—
One of them, two of them, ten of them.
Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch.
So I shall stand by the door and wait
For those who seek it.*

*'I had rather be a door-keeper
So I stand by the door.*



got life?

The Gospel of John A Bible Study with Stan Key

PREDESTINED TO CHOOSE!

John 10:1-42

- I. To be a sheep or not to be a sheep, that is the question.
 - A. Story of the Calvinist who had a nightmare.
 - B. On **the surface**, John 10 is about sheep and shepherds. Studies and sermons that work at this level are rich and rewarding, typically focusing on:
 - 1. The qualities of **sheep** (defenseless, noisy, herd mentality, dumb, etc.).
 - 2. The qualities of a **good shepherd** (provides food, protects from danger, sleeps in the doorway, etc.).
 - C. But when one goes **below the surface**, one discovers an even richer and more rewarding wealth of wisdom. At a deeper (theological) level, this chapter is about how to become a sheep; aka **the Order of Salvation** (*ordo salutis*). This term refers to that series of conceptual steps that denote the progressive **sequence** of events that must take place for someone to experience salvation (become a sheep). Some of these steps take place in the **mind of God** and some are the **responsibility of man**. What may seem abstract and theoretical, however, has profound and practical implications for how we understand:
 - And experience salvation.
 - The security of the believer.
 - Predestination.
 - And practice evangelism.
 - D. Read John 10, noting especially the words:
 - 1. Voice (Jn 10:3-5, 16, 27); call (Jn 10:3); hear (Jn 10:3, 8, 16, 20, 27)
 - 2. Believe (Jn 10:25-26, 37-38, 42)
 - 3. Know (Jn 10:4, 14-16, 27, 38)
 - 4. Life (Jn 10:10, 28); be saved (Jn 10:9)
 - 5. Division (Jn 10:19). Jesus' presence divides people into two groups: those who are sheep and those who are not.

<p>The Good Shepherd Calls His Sheep</p> <p>They hear his voice They believe in him They follow him Thus they have eternal life John 10:1-21</p>	<p>But Many Are Not His Sheep</p> <p>They haven't heard his call They haven't believed in him They are not his followers Thus they will perish John 10:22-42</p>
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Notes on the text:

- 1. The Old Testament provides many references for the metaphor of God being the good shepherd and Israel being the sheep of his pasture (Ps 23, etc.). However, the passage that offers the richest background for understanding John 10 is **Ezekiel 34:1-24**.

In this sermon, the prophet castigates the shepherds of Israel because they have not cared for the sheep (fed them, protected them, sought them when they went astray, etc.). Rather, the shepherds have exploited the sheep (fleeced them for wool to wear, slaughtered them for meat to eat, etc.). God is very angry at the shepherds and will judge them severely. The climax of the sermon is the stunning announcement that **God himself** will come and be the shepherd for his flock!

2. Though many details enrich the text, the emphasis of the passage is clear:
 - The primary characteristic of a *true sheep* is that he **recognizes the voice** of the shepherd. Sheep may be dumb, but they are not stupid.
 - The primary characteristic of a *true shepherd* is that he **lays down his life** for the sheep. No price is too great to provide for their care and well-being.

II. A closer look at John 10:24–29.

*So the Jews... said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not **believe**. The **works** that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not **among my sheep**. My sheep **hear** my voice, and **I know them**, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will **never perish**, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who **has given them** to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (John 10:24–29)*

A. I would believe if only I could.

The Jews make what seems to be a reasonable demand: "If you are the Messiah, just say so!" They outwardly appear to be **undecided** about Jesus. *They would believe in him if only they could.* They need more **evidence**—then they will decide.

B. I could believe if only I would.

Jesus refuses to answer with a simple yes or no. First, he tells them that he has already answered that question (see for example Jn 2:19; 3:14–15; 5:46–47; 6:48; 7:37–38; 8:12, 58). Then he mentions the "works" that he has already done: turned water to wine, healed a paralytic, fed 5,000, walked on water, gave sight to a man born blind. Jesus knew that their problem was not a **lack of evidence**! Jesus knew their problem was not intellectual but rather a willful refusal to believe. *They could believe if only they would.*

Jesus has turned the tables! The Jews think that **Jesus is on trial** because of the outrageous claims he is making. Jesus, however, reveals that it is the Jews who are on trial because of their obstinate unbelief. The problem is not the lack of evidence but the **willful blindness** and deafness of the human heart! How can ears not hear the Voice of the Shepherd calling them by name? How can eyes not see the Light of the World? Jesus is saying, "I'm not the one on trial here. You are!"

C. The world tends to say, "If Jesus would just show us who he is, then we would believe. Seeing is believing, right?" Jesus says, "If you would just believe then I would show you who I am. **Believing is seeing!**" Augustine put it this way: "Seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand."

D. Point to Ponder: How much evidence does it take to enable someone to believe? Reason takes you to the diving board and helps you know that jumping is not

irrational. But faith is what enables you to **jump!** See John 12:28–31a for a dramatic illustration.

E. This text takes us deep into the divine mysteries of the Order of Salvation. It introduces us to great doctrinal truths such as:

1. **Predestination**—The Father “has given” (Jn 10:29) the sheep to Jesus long before Jesus even met the sheep.
2. **Election**—When Jesus tells the Jews that they “do not believe because [they] are not among his sheep” (Jn 10:26), he seems to know those who are sheep and those who are not. It seems as if some are elected to salvation and perhaps some aren’t.
3. **Calling**—Jesus’ sheep “hear” his voice (Jn 10:27) and then believe and follow their shepherd. Others don’t have this experience, but is it because God is not calling or because they are not listening?
4. **Faith**—Believing in the identity (one with the Father) and mission (to lay down his life) of Jesus is the key to becoming a sheep. But some people simply won’t (can’t?) believe. They say they need more evidence. Really?
5. **Perseverance**—Once a sheep is in the fold, Jesus and his Father hold him secure. No outside predator is able to snatch a sheep out of their hands!

The question is: how do these great doctrines (and others) fit together? In what order do they come? Welcome to the doctrine of the Order of Salvation.

F. Two historic interpretations of the Order of Salvation:

CALVINISM	WESLEYAN ARMINIANISM
Predestination (the sovereign decrees)	Foreknowledge
Election (unconditional)	Election/Predestination (conditional)
Calling (irresistible grace)	Prevenient Grace (resistible)
(based in a limited atonement)	(based in a universal atonement)
Regeneration (new birth)	Calling (resistible)
Repentance & Faith	Repentance & Faith
Sanctification	Regeneration (new birth)
Perseverance	Perseverance (conditional)
Glorification	Sanctification
	Glorification

G. A type of biblical order appears in Romans 8:29–30.

*For those whom he **foreknew** he also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also **called**, and those whom he called he also **justified**, and those whom he justified he also **glorified**. (Romans 8:29–30)*

III. How to be a sheep!

A. It begins **before you were born.**

God created you for a good purpose. He has a glorious plan for your life. In his infinite grace, he loved you and sovereignly provided the means for your salvation.

Though he knows in advance how your life will turn out, his foreknowledge is not determinative. You are no **robot!**

B. **Prevenient** grace.

The light that **enlightens every man** (Jn 1:9) makes it possible for you to see the truth though you are blind! And though you are “dead in your trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1), this grace that “goes before” salvation enables you to hear his call and respond. The greatest illustration of this is when Jesus called Lazarus out from the grave. The dead man heard the call! “Lazarus, come out!” (Jn 11:43).

C. The Call.

Sheep know the voice of their shepherd. They hear when he calls **their name**. Salvation is not when we call out to God but when he calls out to us. “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (Jn 15:16). But this call confronts us with **a choice**. Will we listen? Will we respond? Will we follow? Prevenient grace makes the choice a real one!

D. Repentance and Faith.

As we respond to Jesus’ call, we turn from our sins and put our trust in the one who calls. There is no **merit** in this. The ability to respond is not the result of our own noble efforts or hard work. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is **the gift of God**, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph 2:8–9).

E. The image of God.

Repentance and faith make it now possible for the sanctifying Spirit of God to begin a work of **inner transformation**. We are born again and the work of sanctification begins, which restores the image of God. This means that holiness is more than a positional state as we are covered with robes of Christ’s righteousness. It means that our heart is genuinely changed and we are perfected in love.

F. Assurance of salvation.

Our salvation is absolutely secure as long as we remain in the sheep fold. No one can snatch us out of his hands (Jn 10:28–29). Salvation is not dependent on my hold on God but on **his hold on me!** However, the reality of indwelling sin makes it possible for one to wander out of the fold and potentially one day reach such a state of disobedience that **apostasy** occurs, and salvation is lost.

G. Glorification.

For those who continue in faith to the end, a crown of life awaits. “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears **we shall be like him**, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (I Jn 3:2–3).

IV. Predestined to Choose.

A. You are gods.

When Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6 (“You are gods”), he is neither introducing some new pantheistic doctrine of divine humanity nor equating his own unique divine status (“I and the Father are one”) with humans. The reference seems aimed at the unbelieving Jews, reminding them that they were masters of **their own destiny!** They had a “godlike” ability to choose—and like all divine choices, the consequences will go on forever! Deep within every human soul resides a kingdom where **self is sovereign**.

Not even Almighty God will intervene! God will go to every conceivable length and expense to save people, but he will never rob them of their God-given ability to choose!

B. Yet no one can boast.

God's wisdom has ordained so that prevenient **grace** enables even dead sinners to respond and so that there is just enough **evidence** to make faith possible. If we are ultimately saved, it will be by grace alone (He did it!). But if we are lost, it will be our own fault (I did it).

C. Today, if you hear his voice.

Salvation, like marriage, is an ongoing **relationship**. There may have been an original choice, but, like any relationship, salvation is composed of decisions made every day. **Today** is the day of salvation! "Today, if you **hear his voice**, do not harden your hearts..." (Heb 3:7-4:11).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the primary characteristic of a sheep?
2. If sinners are dead (and thus deaf and blind), how is it possible for them to hear the voice of the One who calls them or to see the light of the world?
3. What are the implications that flow out of our theology of how we understand the Order of Salvation?
4. Discuss the phrase "predestined to choose."
5. How do most people in the church today understand the security of the believer? Has this study confirmed that understanding or challenged it?



The battle is lost or won in the secret places of the will before God.... The battle may take one minute or a year, that will depend on me, not on God; but it must be wrestled out alone before God.... Nothing has any power over the man who has fought out the battle before God and won there... (Oswald Chambers, 362).



‘Tis Not that I Did Choose You

By Josiah Conder (1836)

*Lord, ‘tis not that I did choose You;
That, I know, could never be,
For this heart would still refuse You
Had Your grace not chosen me.
You removed the sin that stained me,
Cleansing me to be Your own;
For this purpose You ordained me,
That I live for you alone.*

*It was grace in Christ that called me,
Taught my darkened heart and mind,
Else the world had yet enthralled me,
To Your heav’nly glories blind.
Now I worship none above You;
For Your grace alone I thirst,
Knowing well that, if I love You,
You, O Father, loved me first.*

*Haste then on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith and winged by prayer.
All but heav’n is transitory;
God’s own hand shall guide you there.
Soon shall end this earthly story;
Swift shall pass the pilgrim days,
Hope soon change to heav’nly glory,
Faith to sight and prayer to praise.*





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The Gospel of John A Bible Study with Stan Key

THE EMOTIONAL JESUS

John 11:1–53

I. In search of the real Jesus.

After spending three years in daily fellowship, Jesus asked Philip a surprising question: “Have I been with you so long, and you still **do not know me?**” (Jn 14:9). Yes, it’s true. One can spend lots of time with Jesus and yet fail to really know him.

A. The quest for the historical Jesus.

History is full of examples of those who have spent time with Jesus, wanting to know him, but in the end the “Jesus” they discovered was only **their own image** reflected in a distorted mirror. For example, some have discovered:

1. The **mystical** Jesus. Pious, contemplative, monastic, and ready to teach a class on Spiritual Formation.
2. The **hippie** Jesus. Chill out and drop out of the rat race and move to a farm in Montana and form a community of love.
3. The **trendy** Jesus. It’s cutting edge, cool, and hip to be a Jesus follower.
4. The **social action** Jesus. It’s all about helping the hungry, the marginalized, the poor, and those who have been victimized.
5. The **political** Jesus. Whether on the left or the right, Jesus is identified with a specific political agenda.
6. The **nice** Jesus. Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child. Jesus looks and acts a lot like Mr. Rogers.
7. The **therapeutic** Jesus. Jesus can help you discover healing from past hurts and enable you to find true self-esteem.
8. The **American dream** Jesus. Jesus wants you to be healthy, wealthy, and happy.

B. The only Jesus who has power to save is the true Jesus revealed in the New Testament.

*I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims **another Jesus** than the one we proclaimed... you put up with it readily enough. (II Corinthians 11:3–4)*

C. One of the ways people have misunderstood the real Jesus is in terms of his **emotions**. He may occasionally smile, but for the most part he is stoical, calm, and collected. This is what it means to be spiritual, right? To picture him angry, sad, or agitated is difficult.¹ However, two tragic consequences result from a **dispassionate** Jesus:

1. Like Philip, we don’t really know him. This is serious and has the potential to put our very **salvation** at stake. “Another Jesus” has no power to save.

¹ Thus, many picture Jesus as emotionless, perhaps like Spock of *Star Trek*. Being half-Vulcan, Spock is a type of humanoid that lives by reason and logic with as little interference from emotion as possible.

2. An emotionless Jesus is not fully human. Thus, we have neither the model to help us express **our own emotions** nor the power to express them properly.
 - D. This study of John 11 will focus especially on the emotions of Jesus—and what that means for you and for me. We will center our attention on verses 33–38.
- II. A brief survey of John 11:1–53.

	Jn 11:1–16	Jn 11:17–37	Jn 11:38–44	Jn 11:45–53
Jesus	Makes a decision	Comforts Mary & Martha	Performs a miracle	People respond to what Jesus has done
Lazarus	He dies	His death produces a crisis of faith	He is raised from the dead	His resurrection produces a crisis of faith
Mary & Martha	“Jesus, come and help!”	“If only you had been here...”	“I believe...”	Joy!
Faith	The context of faith (grief, loss, pain)	The great question: “Do you believe?”	The results of faith	The absence of faith

Notes:

1. The main character, Lazarus, never speaks and is passive throughout the narrative. He only responds when **his name** is called (Jn 11:43), illustrating the truth of John 10:3, “The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”
2. This story is not really about life and death but about **faith** and **unbelief**. Mary and Martha are heroines because, in the most desperate of circumstances, they believe! Their faith is not in what Jesus will do but in **who Jesus is!** “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God...” (Jn 11:27). Key verse: “If you believe you will see...” (Jn 11:40). The world says that **seeing** is believing. The Gospel says, believing is seeing. “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (Jn 6:29).
3. The High Priest Caiaphas was arrogant, unloving, cynical, and self-serving, and yet he still preached a really **good sermon** (Jn 11:49–53): Jesus will “die **for the people**” (on behalf of, in the place of)—not only the Jewish people, but **all** people!
4. John wants us to see the *similarities* between the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11:38–44) and the resurrection of Jesus (Jn 20:1–29): burial in a cave, a great stone, the role of women, the grave clothes, etc. But especially he wants us to see the **differences!**
 - a. *The stone.* The stone at the entrance to Lazarus’ tomb was rolled away so that Lazarus could **get out**. But the stone at the entrance to Jesus’ tomb was (miraculously!) rolled away so that the disciples could **get in!**
 - b. *The grave clothes* (the wrapping, the shroud). Both Lazarus and Jesus were wrapped like a mummy. When raised, Lazarus could thus only shuffle until **others helped him** to get out of this straight jacket (Jn 11:44). How different was the situation with Jesus (read Jn 20:5–8). The linen clothes surrounding the body had **collapsed** like a cocoon—the body had somehow passed through the wrapping and the face cloth was **neatly folded** by itself. Just seeing this produced faith in disciples!
 - c. *The body.* Lazarus re-inhabited his old body. Technically, we should call what happened to him a **resuscitation** or a **reanimation** of a corpse.² One day, he

² Lazarus had a type of near-death experience.

would go through the death experience all over again—poor fellow. Similarly, Jesus came to life again in a **physical** body (he was no ghost). He could be touched and he could eat food (Lk 24:36–43). His body was so ordinary, Mary Magdalene mistook him for the gardener (Jn 20:15) and the travelers on the road to Emmaus thought he was just another Passover visitor in Jerusalem (Lk 24:16, 18, 31). And yet, in this new and glorified body, Jesus could appear and disappear behind closed doors. He could move immediately from one location to another. Jesus' resurrection was the first installment of the final great resurrection at the Last Day (Jn 5:28–29), when all believers will receive a "**spiritual body**" like his: imperishable, glorious, and powerful (I Cor 15: 35–53; Phil 3:21).

III. Sanctified Emotions.

In telling the story, John is just as struck by the emotions of Jesus as he is by the raising of Lazarus. Rather than downplaying these emotions, John **emphasizes** them! Nowhere else do we have such a glimpse into the emotional life of our Lord. As he faced death,³ Jesus' emotions were ignited to fiery heat.

*When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was **deeply moved**⁴ in his spirit and **greatly troubled**⁵. And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus **wept**. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, **deeply moved** again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. (John 11:33–38)*

A. Though, Jesus exhibited other emotions throughout his life and ministry,⁶ we will focus only on the three mentioned here:

1. **Anger** mixed with **grief**.

Jesus is "deeply moved" (Jn 11:33, 38). The Greek word (*embrimaomai*) is very strong and can even be used to describe the snorting of a horse. The word typically refers to anger and indignation. Notice what provoked this emotional response in Jesus in this setting. He saw:

- Mary and the **others weeping**—empathy, sympathy, etc.
- The **results of sin**—death, separation, etc.
- **His own death**, only a few days away—separation, condemnation, and hell!

On other occasions Jesus got visibly upset. Note especially the things that made him angry (the **triggers**) and how his anger was mixed with **grief**:

a. Religious **hypocrisy**.

When the Temple was misused and worship was turned into a market, Jesus took a whip and cleaned house. "Zeal for your house will **consume** me" (Jn 2:13–17). See also Matthew 23.

³ Paul calls death "the last enemy" (I Cor 15:26). Though Jesus seemed calm when confronting disease, demons, and sin, he was profoundly agitated when he looked death in the face!

⁴ Other translations: "groaned" (KJV), "a deep anger welled up within him" (NLT), "moved with indignation" (Living Bible).

⁵ Other translations: "visibly distressed" (J.B. Philips).

⁶ Notably, compassion and joy.

- b. Hard hearts and **willful** unbelief.

When the Pharisees complained that Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath, “he looked around at them with anger, **grieved** at their hardness of heart” (Mk 3:5).

- c. Neglect of **children**.

When his disciples hindered children from coming to him, Jesus became “**indignant**” (Mk 10:13–14). The Greek word (*aganakteo*) also carries the idea of grief.

- d. Spiritual **mediocrity**.

Though the word “anger” is not used, the church of Laodicea provoked a visceral reaction for Jesus. Their lukewarm faith made him **nauseated** (Rv 3:15–16).

NOTE: Though Jesus is a **Lamb**, he can become very angry.⁷ Indeed, **righteous indignation** is one of his primary characteristics! This has profound implications for his followers. The point is not to get rid of (suppress, deny, etc.) our anger but to model our anger after his (Eph 4:26). This is done when:

- We become angry for the **right reasons**.
- We express anger in the **right way**.
- Our anger is mixed with **grief**.

2. Inner **turmoil / agitation**.

Jesus is “greatly troubled” (Jn 11:33; see also Jn 12:27; 13:21). The Greek word (*tarasso*) means to stir up, to disturb, to be terribly upset. It can be used of water that has been troubled (Jn 5:7) or a mob of people that is agitated (Acts 17:13). Though Jesus is “troubled,” he tells his disciples not to be: “Let not your heart be troubled” (Jn 14:1, 27).

NOTE: In ministry to others, often to bring peace to someone else’s troubled heart means that my own inner world **churns in turmoil**.

3. **Grief / sorrow**.

Jesus “weeps” (Jn 11:35). The shortest verse in the Bible actually conveys a profound truth. Notice the **contrast** between Jesus and the others at the tomb. Martha and her friends are **wailing** loudly and **sobbing** hysterically (*klaio*—Jn 11:31, 33). Jesus is crying, shedding tears (*dakruo*—Jn 11:35). This is the only place in the New Testament where this verb is used.⁸ It is almost as if the picture of Jesus weeping is **unique** in all human history!

NOTE: A single tear quietly running down the cheek of the Master reveals a deeper grief than the noisy histrionics of everyone else. Emotions must never be measured by **external** signs alone.

- B. Making it personal. Questions for self-discovery.

Think about these three emotions (anger, inner turmoil, grief). In Jesus, these emotions are expressed **perfectly**—without sin. Jesus shows us what it means to be

⁷ When the sixth seal is opened during the last days, kings, generals and other unrepentant sinners will cry out in terror for mountains and rocks to fall on them to shield them from “the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev 6:16).

⁸ Though the noun form (“tears”) is used often.

fully human. *Behold, the man!* (Jn 19:5). What about you? How are these emotions expressed (or not expressed) in your life? Find a quiet corner and ask the Holy Spirit to help you answer the following questions:

1. Anger
 - What makes you angry?
 - What *should* make you angry?
 - How should you express this anger?
2. Inner turmoil
 - What causes your heart to be troubled?
 - What *should* cause your heart to be troubled?
 - How should you express this inner turmoil?
3. Grief
 - What makes you sad and causes you grief?
 - What *should* cause you grief?
 - How should you express this grief?

Conclusion: God does not want to remove our emotions, he wants to **sanctify** them!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What did you learn from this lesson about the emotions of Jesus?
2. What did you learn from this lesson about your own emotions?
3. Share with your group some of your own discoveries from the self-discovery questions you answered in III. B.



Jesus Wept!

John R. MacDuff & J. Calvin Bushey
(sung to the tune of “Once in Royal David’s City”)

*Jesus wept! Those tears are over,
But his heart is still the same;
Kinsman, friend, and elder brother,
Is his everlasting name.
Savior, who can love like thee,
Gracious one of Bethany?*

*When the pangs of trial seize me,
When the waves of sorrow roll,
I will lay my head on Jesus,
Refuge of the troubled soul.
Surely, none can feel like thee,
Weeping one of Bethany!*

*Jesus wept! And still in glory
He can mark each mourner’s tear;
Loving to retrace the story
Of the hearts he solaced here;
Lord, when I am called to die,
Let me think of Bethany.*

*Jesus wept! That tear of sorrow
Is a legacy of love;
Yesterday, today, tomorrow,
He the same doth ever prove.
Thou art all in all to me,
Living one of Bethany.*





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The Gospel of John A Bible Study with Stan Key

THE HOUR HAS COME

John 12:1–36

I. The Importance of Symbols.

- A. Imagine a religious cult whose leader was executed in an **electric chair**. But rather than being embarrassed, the members actually began to celebrate their leader's execution and the electric chair became the symbol of their faith and worship.
- B. As strange as the imagined story may sound, the rise of Christianity is even stranger! The cross is no incidental part of the Christian faith. Without the cross there is no Christianity! The Christian faith and practice are **cruciform**. The cross defines what we believe and how we live. It is **the key** that unlocks the mystery of the gospel.
- C. Though some may think that the **centrality** of the cross is something imposed by a group of morbidly pessimistic theologians in later centuries, nothing could be further from the truth! The fundamental importance of the cross is spelled out clearly in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles:
- “And Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man **must suffer** many things and be rejected... and be killed... And he said this plainly” (Mk 8:31–32).
 - “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to **give his life** as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45).
 - “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd **lays down his life** for the sheep” (Jn 10:11).
 - “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him **crucified**” (I Cor 2:2).
 - “Far be it from me to boast except in **the cross** of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal 6:14).
- D. Few passages emphasize the centrality of the cross with greater clarity than John 12.

II. The Hour Has Come.

- A. In discerning the will of God, sometimes the *When?* is as important as the *What?* For Jesus to accomplish his mission, **timing** is of utmost importance. The Gospel of John emphasizes this:
1. Repeatedly, Jesus resisted pressure from other people who tried to push him to action and to declare who he was and why he had come. Over and over, he said, “My hour has **not yet** come” (Jn 2:4; 7:6–8, 30; 8:20).
 2. But in John 12, the situation changes. Now it becomes crystal clear to Jesus that “the hour **has come**” (Jn 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1).
- B. The hour for what?
- In speaking of his “hour,” Jesus was referring to **the mission/purpose** on which he was sent. Infinitely more important than healing the sick, feeding the hungry, teaching the uninformed, or raising the dead, Jesus’ mission, as the **Lamb of God**, was to “**take away sin**” (Jn 1:29). He could accomplish this purpose only by **giving his life** as a sacrifice—on a **cross**—at **Passover**.

In theological terms, the purpose of the **incarnation** is the **atonement**. The reason God became man was so that men could be reconciled to God. *Christ without the cross* can perform miraculous signs, but he has no power to deal with sin. *The cross without Christ* may appear heroic and exemplary, but it is only just another example of senseless cruelty. But if the One suffering on the cross is indeed God in human flesh freely giving himself to take away sin—then the consequences are **revolutionary!**¹

- C. In John 12:1–36, **three events** signaled clearly to Jesus that his hour had come: it was time to give his life as a sacrificial lamb.

First Event	Second Event	Third Event	Jesus' Response
Mary anoints Jesus' body	Jesus enters Jerusalem as king	Non-Jews desire an audience with Jesus	"Now is my soul troubled... Now is the judgment of the world... The light is with you only a little longer... So believe!"
Jesus is being prepared—for burial!	Jesus announces his kingdom has come—from a donkey!	Jesus' glory is revealed—by Greeks!	
Jn 12:1–11	Jn 12:12–19	Jn 12:20–26	Jn 12:27–36

- D. Brief notes on the text:

1. Mary anoints Jesus body (Jn 12:1–11).

Though no one else has a clue about the true nature of Jesus' mission, Mary of Bethany does. She **gets it!** At least to some degree, she understands that Jesus has come to give his life—he has come to die. Her lavish expression of love is actually a way of preparing his body for burial (see Jn 19:39–40). This has caused some to call Mary the first Christian **theologian!**²

2. Jesus enters Jerusalem as king (Jn 12:12–19).

Until now, Jesus has been quiet and **secretive** about his true identity and the kingdom he has come to establish. But now, Jesus goes public in a big way. The message is loud and clear: Israel's king is here! But wait—why the **donkey?**

3. Greeks desire an audience with Jesus (Jn 12:20–26).

Among the visitors in Jerusalem for the Passover were some Greeks (non-Jews). Their request to meet Jesus is the final **signal** that causes Jesus to say, "The hour has come..." It is now time to give his life for the sins of "the **world**" (Jn 1:29; 3:16; 12:19; etc.).

4. Jesus pauses in sober contemplation concerning what is about to happen (Jn 12:27–36).

John's Gospel does not tell the story of Jesus' agonizing prayer in Gethsemane. Rather, it gives us this snapshot of Jesus' **inner turmoil** as he faces the cross. He considers asking his Father to save him from this hour, but then solemnly reaffirms that the very reason he has come is for this hour (Jn 12:27).

¹ The title of N. T. Wright's new book on the cross is illustrative: *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion* (HarperOne, 2016).

² See Carolyn Custis James and her book *When Life & Beliefs Collide*.

III. The Crux of the Matter³

Before we **experience** the cross (Jn 18–19), let's first pause and absorb what John 12:1–36 tells us about this most defining reality of our faith.

A. The cross is **the reason** Jesus came.

Many depictions of the gospel (movies, books, sermons, etc.) imply that the cross was a tragic end to an otherwise good life. “Poor Jesus, he was trapped and victimized by wicked men. It's too bad that it had to end like this.” No! The cross is no accident. Jesus is not a helpless victim. His life was not **taken** from him—he **freely gave** it!

- “For this purpose I have come...” (Jn 12:27).
- “No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again” (Jn 10:18).
- “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions [6,000 x 12 = 72,000] of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?” (Mt 26:53).

NOTE: God's purpose is not to save us **from** suffering but to save us **through** it. Our pain can be a means of redemption for those around us! “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you... as though something **strange** were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings...” (I Pt 4:12).

B. The cross turns our world **upside-down**.

Jesus speaks of his crucifixion *not* as being “humiliated” or even being “executed” but rather as being “**glorified**,” “**exalted**,” and “**lifted up**” (Jn 12:23, 32, 34; also see Jn 3:14; 8:28). Jesus sees the cross as being elevated in glory, lifted up in regal splendor; a place of power, not weakness; of glory, not shame; of triumph, not failure; of life, not death. Jesus sees the cross as his **throne**!

NOTE: Viewing the cross as a royal throne is the **reversal** of almost every human value! For those who follow Christ, the cross completely redefines how we think about:

- **Power**: not the ability to get what I want but the ability to help others get what they truly need.
- **Success**: not doing my will but doing God's will.
- **Glory**: not being at the top of the food chain and having many servants but humbly taking a servant's role so that others' needs can be met (washing feet).
- **Wisdom**: not having all the answers but rather knowing the one who does; being wise enough to know what a fool I am.
- **Wealth**: not hoarding earthly treasures but discovering that it really is more blessed to give than to receive.
- **Life**: not counting our days but making our days count: to live is Christ, to die is gain (Phil 1:21)!

C. The cross **welcomes** those who we tend to **exclude**.

Jesus had said earlier, “I have **other sheep** that are not of this fold. I must bring them also... so there will be one flock and one shepherd” (Jn 10:16). So when the

³ The Latin word for cross is *crux*. Literally, “the crux of the matter” is “the cross of the matter.” Idiomatically, the phrase refers to something that is the central or most important element of an issue. We might say, therefore, that the crux of the matter is the matter of the crux/cross!

Greeks come to see Jesus, he realizes that his hour has come. The Jews are smug about their privileged position as God's **chosen people** and feel it a tragedy when "the world" follows Jesus (Jn 12:19). The cross is God's ultimate affirmation of love for all people everywhere! "For God so loved **the world** that he gave his only son..." (Jn 3:16).

NOTE: The cross will turn our lives inside out! Rather than being **inward** focused on our own needs, the cross will turn our focus **outward**, on the needs of others. It's not about me!

D. The cross confronts us with **a decision**.

As Jesus faced the cross he said, "Now is the **judgment** of the world... The light is with you a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you..." (Jn 12:31, 35). When the aroma of Christ's passion "fills the house" (Jn 12:3), some people love the smell, others hate it (like Judas). When Jesus comes into our lives as king, riding on a donkey, we either welcome him or look for ways to get rid of him. No one can remain **neutral** in the presence of the cross!

NOTE: When Jesus is "lifted up" he has the capacity to "draw all people to himself" (Jn 12:32). Yet, no one can come to him "unless the Father draws him" (Jn 6:44). Therefore, if you are being drawn to the crucified Christ, **today** is the day of salvation. Tomorrow will be **too late**.

E. The cross is **our model** for life and ministry.

Jesus said: "If anyone would come after me, let him **deny himself** and take up **his cross** daily and follow me" (Lk 9:23). There is not one cross in the gospel—but two! To follow Jesus is to live a life that is **cruciform**! "And Jesus showed them his hands, and said... 'As the Father has sent me, even so, I am sending you'" (Jn 20:20–21). This is how life comes to the world: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it **bears much fruit**. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it..." (Jn 12:24–25).

NOTE: Though many think that the cross is all about determining where you go when you die, the New Testament simply does not talk in these terms. Rather, the cross is about where you go **when you live**! The cross is intended to define our lives and turn our world right-side up! The point of the cross is to enable us to be God-reflecting, image-bearing, life-giving, love-offering models of holiness and agents of redemption. Death works in us so that **life** can work in others (II Cor 4:12).

SUMMARY: The cross is **the key** to everything. Easter ensures that the cross will be interpreted in the right way: not as the reversal of a defeat but as the proclamation of a **victory**!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you think enabled Mary to see that Jesus' mission was to give his life when nobody else could see it?
2. Describe what those in the crowd must have thought when they saw Jesus coming to Jerusalem as king...yet riding on a donkey.
3. What was it about the coming of the Greeks that caused Jesus to think about the cross?
4. This lesson mentions five truths about the cross (listed below). Which of these truths about the cross is most difficult for you to grasp?
 - a. The cross is the reason Jesus came.
 - b. The cross turns our world upside down.
 - c. The cross welcomes those we tend to exclude.
 - d. The cross confronts us with a decision.
 - e. The cross is our model for life and ministry.



At the Cross

By Isaac Watts (1707)

*Alas! and did my Savior bleed
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?*

*Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!*

*Well might the sun in darkness hide
And shut his glories in,
When Christ, the mighty Maker died,
For man the creature's sin.*

*Thus might I hide my blushing face
While His dear cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt my eyes to tears.*

*But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe:
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do.*

Refrain:

*At the cross, at the cross where I first saw
the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!*



got life?

The Gospel of John A Bible Study with Stan Key

BLINDED BY LIGHT

John 12:36b–50

I. Missing the Obvious

A. Story of the man with a wheelbarrow.

B. Hidden in plain sight

1. The public ministry of Jesus climaxes with the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11:1–44), the triumphal entry (Jn 12:12–19), and a Voice from heaven affirming Jesus’ identity and mission (Jn 12:28). These are all very **public** declarations that make it **crystal clear** both *who* Jesus is and *why* he has come. Then we read: “Jesus departed and hid himself from them” (Jn 12:36b). But how can the Light of the World hide himself? Good question! John wants us to know that Jesus is hidden in **plain sight**.

2. The Jews failed to see what was obvious! For 1,900 years they had waited for their Messiah. But when he came, they **didn’t recognize** him (see Jn 1:9–11). Why oh why did Israel not recognize her Messiah? How did the people of God miss God? How did they fail to see the Light of the World or to hear the Voice of God? Rather than being embarrassed by such questions, the Bible **highlights** them! Why? Because this is more than history. It still happens today!

C. Let’s look again at the big picture of John’s Gospel.

Prologue	Miraculous Signs Climaxing with the raising of Lazarus “My hour has not yet come”	The Passion Climaxing with the raising of Jesus “My hour has come”	Epilogue
	Public Ministry Jesus reveals himself to the world	Private Ministry Jesus reveals himself to his disciples	
Jn 1:1–18	Jn 1:19–12:50	Jn 13:1–20:31	Jn 21:1–25

II. Two Questions that Won’t Go Away

John 12:36b–50 brings us to the end of the first part of John’s Gospel. In these few pregnant verses, John highlights two earth-shaking questions.

A. How did they miss him?

*When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done **so many signs** before them, they still **did not believe** in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:*

*“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,
and to whom has **the arm of the Lord** been revealed?” [quoting Isa 53:1]*

*Therefore they **could not believe**. For again Isaiah said,
“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart,
lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart,
and turn, and I would heal them.” [quoting Isa 6:10]*

Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. (John 12:36b–43)

1. Think of all the signs Jesus has done up to this point: water to wine, healings, feeding 5,000 people, walking on water, raising the dead, etc. These were **public** and **verifiable**. Think of all the words that Jesus has said: “I am the bread of life,” “I am the light of the world,” “before Abraham was, I am,” “I am the resurrection and the life,” etc. And yet people still did not believe. Apparently, this was not enough. **How much evidence** does it take to convince someone of the truth? Perhaps if God spoke audibly from heaven, you say? (see John 12:28–31).

If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead. (Luke 16:31)

2. Notice that at first the people “would not believe.” Then, they reached a point when they “could not believe.” This shows both how we are free to examine the evidence and **choose** to believe or not. But when we choose *not* to believe, there comes a point when we are no longer in control of our destiny. Humans are **free** to choose but **not free** to control the results of those choices.
3. But God is not **surprised** by such brazen unbelief from his own people and we should not be surprised by it either. The prophet Isaiah foretold that this would happen!¹

B. What is it he really wants?

*And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever **sees** me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as **light**, so that whoever **believes** in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.” (John 12:44–50)*

1. What God really wants is for us **to see** the reality of his Son and what he came to do for us on the cross. But to see we must have light. Therefore, above everything else God wants you and me to **love the light!** This is what it means to believe.
2. What happens when a bright light is turned on in a dark closet?
 - We see **the truth** of what is there (reality).
 - Rats and roaches scurry away because they **love the darkness** (evil).
 - At first, the light is **blinding** (the pain of seeing the truth).
 - We make a **decision** (embrace the light or go back to what it was before).

¹ Isaiah 6:9–10 is quoted often in the New Testament (Mt 13:13–15; Mk 4:12; Jn 12:38; Acts 28:27). This passage was crucial in helping the early church explain why Israel did not recognize Jesus as her Messiah.

Those who reject Jesus have been **blinded by light!** Though Jesus did not come to judge them, that, in effect, is the result of his coming.

III. How to Miss Your Messiah

The Gospel of John tells the tragic story of how the people of God missed their Messiah when he came. They did not know who he was. Can this still happen today? Is it possible that Light comes into our lives (truth, witnesses, evidence) and we fail to see God in our midst? Like Israel, we too can miss our Messiah:

A. When we love **the wrong things**.

Jesus said that his purpose for coming into the world was “to bear witness to **the truth**. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice” (John 18:37). Truth, like light, exposes things as they really are. If you don’t want that, then you don’t want Jesus. Jesus explained the unbelief of the Jews this way: “*Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe in me*” (Jn 8:45).

- Some love **public opinion** and care so much about their **image** that they allow peer pressure to determine what they believe. “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (Jn 5:44; 12:43).
- Some “love **the darkness** rather than the light because their deeds are evil.” They hate the light because it exposes who they really are (Jn 3:19–21).
- Our supreme love must be the Truth; which is the same thing as saying that our supreme love must be **Jesus**, who is the truth (Jn 14:6).

We will never recognize our Messiah until we love the truth and embrace the light that both **exposes** our sins, **reveals** what we truly are, and **guides** us in the way we should go.

B. When we don’t **hear his voice**.

God loves the whole world (Jn 3:16), both Jews and Gentiles, everyone. And when his call goes forth, his sheep hear his voice and respond (Jn 10:3–5). No one becomes a believer in Jesus who has not heard his Voice. The question is not “Are you called?” but rather “Are you **listening**?”

C. When we refuse to let God **define himself**.

There’s a story of seven-year-old Johnny drawing a picture in Sunday School.... There is a reason the 2nd commandment **forbids** us from making an image of God: because when *we* define God, we get it wrong every time! The reason we struggle with Jesus’ words (I am the truth, drink my blood, etc.) and behaviors (cleanse the temple, ride on a donkey, curse the fig tree, etc.) is because he is not conforming to *our* expectations! But that is the whole point of his coming! He wants to **reveal** the truth about who he really is.

D. When we confuse **cause and effect**.

Most of us think that **seeing** is believing. We think if we just had enough evidence *then* we would step out in faith. No! The truth is just the opposite. Standing at the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus told Martha, “Did I not tell you that if you **believed** you would **see** the glory of God?” (Jn 11:40). Jesus teaches us that believing is seeing. We don’t reason our way into faith. Rather we believe our way into rationality! “I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand” (Anselm of Canterbury).

E. When our goal in life is **to get our own way**.

No one comes to believe in Jesus until they are “willing to do God’s will” (Jn 7:17). Self-centered obsession with the goal of getting my way will blind me to the presence of God forever! We will never come to a knowledge of the truth until, in **humility**, we begin to **want his will** more than our own.

F. When we read the Bible **the wrong way**.

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me...” (Jn 5:39). Ironically, Bible study sometimes is a means of missing our Messiah! The goal of Bible study is not to know the Bible, but to **know him!**

G. When we don’t feel we need what **he came to offer**.

Though Jesus has the ability to heal the sick and feed the hungry, this does not express the reason he came. “Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the **sin of the world**” (Jn 1:29). If my interest in God is only that he will make me healthy, wealthy, and happy then chances are good I will not recognize my Messiah when he comes.

IV. Point of No Return

I’m told there is a place on the Niagara River, above the falls, which is designated “The Point of No Return.” Regardless of the craft you are in, once this point is passed, you *will* go over the falls. The current is just too strong to resist. Similarly, there is a point of no return in our spiritual lives. Refusing the Messiah who comes for us is serious business. At first we may choose not to believe but if we continue in such **willful unbelief**, the day will come when we *cannot* believe. We reach the point of no return when God himself blinds our eyes and hardens our heart—in a permanent manner (Jn 12:40). Therefore:

1. Today, if you **hear** his voice, respond now.
2. Today, if you **see** the light, embrace it now.
3. John 12 is not only when Jesus says, “the hour has come” (vv. 23, 27). It is also the moment when each of us must also say, “the hour has come.” A **decision** must be made. To believe, or not to believe, that is question.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Though Isaiah prophesied that Israel would reject her Messiah, the Gospel of John holds the Jews fully responsible for their unbelief. How do you reconcile these two realities?
2. Describe how a bright light can help us to see clearly and at the same time it can blind us by its brightness. What spiritual lesson does John's Gospel want us to draw from this reality?
3. Look again the seven reasons people miss their Messiah. Which one of these reasons describes something you may personally struggle with:
 - a. They love the wrong things.
 - b. They don't listen to his voice.
 - c. They refuse to let God define himself.
 - d. They confuse cause and effect.
 - e. Their goal in life is to get their own way.
 - f. They read the Bible the wrong way.
 - g. They don't feel they need what Jesus came to offer.
4. Do you know someone who you fear may have reached the "point of no return"; whose heart is so hardened against God's truth, it is impenetrable? Is the situation really hopeless? What should you be doing about this?



A Topical Study of the Gospel of John

A Bible Study with Stan Key

WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE¹

John 7:37–39

I. A Biblical History of Water

From the second verse of the Bible (Gn 1:2) to the final paragraph (Rv 22:17), the Bible talks a lot about **water** (and related subjects such as rivers, springs, rain, thirst, etc.). Beyond physical descriptions, water in the Bible also has symbolic meaning. Water is a **sign**, pointing beyond itself to truths of deep and eternal significance.

A. Some famous water stories in the Bible:

1. Genesis 1 tells us that before God begins his creative acts, his **Spirit** hovers over “the **face** of the waters” (v 2). On the second day of creation, God separates the upper waters from the lower waters by an “expanse” called Heaven (vv 6–8). On the third day, God works with the lower waters so that the dry land appears (vv 9–10).
2. Genesis 6–9 tells the story of **the flood**. God destroys the earth and at the same time saves Noah and his family—by water. Peter sees in the flood a picture of **baptism** (I Pt 3:20–21).
3. Forced out of Abraham’s home, Hagar and Ishmael wander into the desert where they have no water. Hagar cries out to God as she realizes death is near. “Then God **opened her eyes** and she saw a well of water” (Gn 21:14–19).
4. The first plague on Egypt is when Moses turns the water of the Nile to **blood** (Ex 7:14–25). Jesus’ first miracle is changing water into **wine** (Jn 2:1–11).
5. Redemption occurs when God leads the Hebrews **through the waters** of the Red Sea (Ex 14). Paul sees this as a type of baptism (I Cor 10:1–2).
6. On two separate occasions, God provides water **from a rock** for his people as they journey through the desert (Ex 17:1–7; Nm 20:10–13).
7. Elijah’s ministry is defined the absence and presence of **rain** (I Kgs 17–18).

B. The Psalms and the prophets often speak symbolically of water.

- “**Wash me** thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ...Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Ps 51:2, 7).
- “O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul **thirsts for you**; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water” (Ps 63:1).
- “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has **no money**, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which **does not satisfy**? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food” (Isa 55:1–2).
- “Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, declares the Lord, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the **fountain** of living waters,

¹ The title is taken from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s famous poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), which contains the couplet: “Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink.” It tells of a ship becalmed in uncharted waters near the equator where the sailors are tormented by thirst, although surrounded by (undrinkable) water.

and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold **no water**”(Jer 2:12–13).

- “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be **clean** from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you...” (Ez 36:25–26).

C. What we can learn from **geography**.

1. Almost all the major capital cities in history have been built on a river. But **Jerusalem** has no river! In fact, Canaan has no river, except for the smallish Jordan River which mainly serves as a boundary. So how could the Land of Promise be fruitful and a place of blessing without a river? Answer: by **springs** and by **rain**.
2. Two bodies of water define Canaan and serve as a huge object lesson:
 - a. *The Sea of Galilee*. Beautiful and full of life, it **receives** water from the snows of the mountains and **gives** water through the outlet of the Jordan River.
 - b. *The Dead Sea*. The lowest spot on earth, this salinized, smelly bog has no outlet. It only receives. Thus, it is a sea of death.

D. Conclusion: Our survey of the Bible shows that water symbolizes:

1. The **blessing** of God
2. The possibility of **life** .
3. **Cleansing** from all that defiles.
4. Quenching **thirst** .

II. Water in John’s Gospel.

A. Water is a recurring theme in John’s Gospel. Its rich symbolism flows throughout the narrative.

1. **Baptism** . Whether water was poured on the believer’s head or whether he was immersed, water symbolized cleansing and a new beginning. (Jn 1:25–26; 3:22–26). Water was also used in washing feet. “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me” (Jn 13:5,8).
2. The miracle at Cana. The water used was “for the Jewish rites of **purification** ” (Jn 2:6–10). In this miracle, quenching thirst and being washed clean are tied together.
3. Association with **birth** . “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (Jn 3:5).
4. Living water to **quench thirst** . “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again” (Jn 4:7–14; 6:35).
5. Association with **healing** . At the Pool of Bethesda, people believed that an angel stirred the waters and thus caused miracles of healing (Jn 5:1–9). The blind man washed the mud off that Jesus had put on his eyes at the Pool of Siloam (Jn 9:7).
6. The thirst-quencher dies **thirsty** . “I thirst.” “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (Jn 19:28–30).

7. At Jesus' death, he is pierced with a spear and "blood and **water**" flow from his side (Jn 19:34).
- B. Similar to what we learned in looking at the Bible as a whole, John emphasizes how water is a sign that points us to:
 1. **Cleansing.**
 2. **Satisfying our thirst.**
 3. **Life.**

III. Examination of John 7:37–39

A. The Feast of Tabernacles

The **context** of this passage is the Jewish Feast of **Tabernacles** (Jn 7:2), one of the three annual pilgrimage-festivals that Jews were commanded to keep. It lasted seven days and marked the time when fruit was harvested and gathered in. It was a joyous occasion and people "camped" in booths made of branches. Central to this festival was a water-pouring ceremony when priests would take water from the Pool of Siloam and pour it out at the base of the altar. This was an acted prayer for **rain**. At the climactic moment of the feast, Jesus stands in the precincts of the Temple and **shouts** these words as the people are praying for the rains to come:

*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. Whoever believes in me, as **the Scripture has said**, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the **Spirit**, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37–39)*

B. As the Scripture has said:

1. To which Scripture does Jesus refer? There are numerous Scriptures that speak of the Holy Spirit being poured out—like water:
 - a. "There is **a river** whose streams make glad the city of God.... God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved..." (Ps 46:4–5).
 - b. "For I will **pour water** on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants" (Isa 44:3).
 - c. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will **pour out** my Spirit on all flesh.... Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit" (Joel 2:28–29).
 - d. "In that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth **from the house** of the Lord and water the Valley of Shittim" (Joel 3:18).
 - e. "On that day **living waters** shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea.... And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be **no rain** on them" (Zec 14:8, 17).

f. “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing **from the throne** of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city...” (Rv 22:1–2).

2. But the primary Scripture that Jesus seems to be thinking of is **Ezekiel 47:1–12**.

Ezekiel prophesied at a time when the Temple was **in ruins** and God’s people were exiled in Babylon. God gives him a vision of a **new temple**, one that will fulfill all the promises of God. This temple was never built because Jesus is the fulfilment of what Ezekiel saw. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ ...He was speaking about the temple of his body” (Jn 2:19–21).

Notice three things about this river of water flowing from the temple:

a. Its **direction** (Ez 47:1–2). Flowing eastward, the waters flow downhill from Jerusalem (2,600 feet above sea level) into the desolate wilderness of the Arabah and finally into the Dead Sea (1,300 feet below sea level).

NOTE IT WELL: God intends for his richest blessings to flow to the **most desolate** and “god-forsaken” areas of our world. “Where sin abounds, grace abounds even more” (Rom 5:20).

b. It’s miraculous **increase**. (Ez 47:3–6). What begins as a **trickle** becomes a mighty river so great it could not be crossed! Ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then waist-deep—Only a miracle can explain how a trickling stream, fed by no other tributaries, can keep increasing like this!

NOTE IT WELL: Today, you may be only ankle-deep in God’s river of grace, but don’t be fooled. The day is coming when you will be **engulfed** in an ever-increasing ocean of divine love and blessing. “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Hb 2:14). Water, water, everywhere!

c. It’s healing **power** (Ez 47:7–12). These waters **transform** the smelly, salty Dead Sea into a beautiful, vibrant, and lush fresh water lake surrounded by fruit trees and teeming with fish. Every month the trees will bear a fresh crop of fruit and the leaves of the trees have curative powers.

NOTE IT WELL: This river is a life-giving stream that has the capacity to transform situations that are **hopeless** and **dead**. “Where the river flows, everything will live!” (Ez 47:9).

QUESTION: “Son of man, have you seen this?” (Ez 47:6). Can *you* see the river? Like Hagar, may God **open our eyes** to see what is there (Gn 21:19).

C. Are you thirsty? Dirty? Dead? Well, I’ve got good news for you: there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God!

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. (Revelation 22:17)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Think of a time when you were really thirsty. Describe the symptoms of thirst.
2. Which “water story” from the Bible speaks most strongly to you? Why?
3. The Bible tells us that water does three primary things in the life of the believer: it cleanses, it quenches thirst, and it gives life. Discuss this.
4. Can you see the river of life? Why or why not?



Satisfied

Clara T. Williams (1858–1937)

*All my life long I had panted
For a draught from some cool spring,
That I hoped would quench the burning
Of the thirst I felt within.*

(Refrain)

Hallelujah! I have found Him
Whom my soul so long has craved!
Jesus satisfies my longings;
Through His life I now am saved.

*Feeding on the husks around me,
Till my strength was almost gone,
Longed my soul for something better,
Only still to hunger on.*

*Poor I was, and sought for riches,
Something that would satisfy,
But the dust I gathered round me
Only mocked my soul's sad cry.*

*Well of water, ever springing,
Bread of life, so rich and free,
Untold wealth that never faileth,
My Redeemer is to me.*



A Topical Study of the Gospel of John

A Bible Study with Stan Key

THE MOST IMPORTANT WORD IN THE GOSPEL

John 1:14

I. The Gospel in a Word

- A. To boil the message of the Bible down to a single word sounds presumptuous, but let's try anyway! If asked to name the most important book in the Bible, many Christians would name **John**. The most important chapter? Many would suggest **Chapter 1**. The most important verse? Some would zero in on **verse 14**:¹

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

My question is this: what is the most important **word** in the most important verse in the most important chapter in the most important book in the Bible?

- B. There are a number of good candidates.
1. *Word*. The Word is both *with* God and *is* God. This introduces us to the **Trinity** and the reality that God speaks (the doctrine of **revelation**).
 2. *Flesh*. Jesus fully entered into the human condition. This introduces us to the **incarnation** and leads on to the doctrine of the **atonement**.
 3. *Became*. The Word *is* God but the Word *became* flesh. Can God change? This introduces us to the doctrine of divine **immutability**.
 4. *Dwelt*. "Pitched his tent." Jesus is the tabernacle of God in our midst; **Emmanuel**, God with us.
 5. *Glory*. The **shekinah** was the visible manifestation of God's presence. Though Jesus had neither halo nor obvious divine traits, his coming was glorious.
 6. *Son*. Contrary to what the Koran says, God has a Son! Jesus has always been the **only begotten** Son of God and now has also become the son of Mary.
 7. *Grace*. Loving kindness and covenant faithfulness. God is good.
 8. *Truth*. Righteousness, justice, fidelity. God is just.
- C. In spite of all these good options, I want to suggest that the most important word is a little contraction: "full of grace **and** truth."² We see this pregnant contraction again in John 1:17: "For the law was given through Moses; grace **and** truth came through Jesus Christ." I want to humbly suggest that the entirety of the gospel message and indeed the epic story of the Bible is embedded in this humble, three-letter conjunction.
- D. The power of "and."
1. Apart from the Bible, others have been captured by the power of this little word "and." For example, leadership guru Jim Collins (author of *Built to Last* and *Good to Great*) speaks about the **genius** of "and" and the **tyranny** of "or." His point is that many leaders make the mistake of thinking they have to do this *or* that when they should be thinking *and*.

¹ William Barclay calls John 1:14 "the greatest single verse in the whole New Testament" (Commentary on John, 46).

² The word "and" appears four times in this verse, but I'm referring only to the final occurrence.

2. Almost no one likes a peanut butter sandwich. Or a jelly sandwich. But one enters the realm of culinary delight when introduced to a peanut butter **and** jelly sandwich!
3. In the incarnation, Jesus did not come as the grace-Jesus nor as truth-Jesus. He is the **grace-and-truth** Jesus. The “and” explains everything.
4. Note it well: Jesus is not 50% grace and 50% truth. He is “**full of**” both grace and truth—at the same time, in the same body.
5. Though every illustration has limitations, this may be helpful. In basic chemistry class, we learned the difference between a mixture and a solution:
 - A *mixture*—for example, putting gravel in water; the two ingredients remain **unchanged**, they co-exist.
 - A *solution*—for example, putting powdered Kool-Aid in water. When stirred, both elements are changed. The powder dissolves into the water and a **new reality** emerges from the combination.

In Jesus, grace and truth are still recognizable and distinguishable one from the other. And yet neither is ever quite the same again. They have embraced and intermingled in a way so that a new reality comes out of the combination.

II. The grace-and-truth Jesus.

A. Defining terms.

At first glance, grace and truth seem **incompatible**. Putting them together seems like an effort to reconcile elements that are irreconcilable.

1. *Grace*. Rooted in the Hebrew concept of *hesed* (**steadfast love**, kindness, mercy, lovingkindness), this beautiful word speaks of goodness, kindness, and a passionate commitment to keeping a **relationship** together. It is full of goodwill and readiness to forgive, to heal, to restore, and to bless. In the New Testament, the Greek word *agape* gives a similar idea. Jesus is full of this!
2. *Truth*. Rooted in the Hebrew concept of *emet* (**justice**, righteousness, fidelity) this word speaks to that which **never changes**: God’s law, his truthfulness, his standards. Like the law of gravity, God’s truth is never changing. Jesus did not come to abolish the law and the prophets, but to tighten them up! In the New Testament, the Greek word *aletheia* gives a similar idea. Jesus is full of this!

B. Either/or.

We tend to orient ourselves toward one of these realities *or* the other. The **polarities** between the two seem so great and irreconcilable that we simply cannot embrace them both at the same time. We opt for either/or rather than both/and.

1. Grace people.

These people believe that **God is love** and desires everyone to have a nice day. He is quick to forgive and welcomes anyone and everyone. God loves us just as we are. Such people tend to be **nice** and seldom ruffle anyone’s feathers. They have a horror of coming across as “judgmental.” They love to affirm all kinds of people and believe **tolerance** is a virtue. Relationships are supreme.

2. Truth people.

These people believe that **God is light** and in him is no darkness at all. He is just and righteous. His Word is truth and is unchanging and eternal. He separates light from darkness, good from evil, and sheep from goats. Such

people have strong convictions rooted in God's Word and are quick to speak out about injustice and sin. They have a horror of **compromise**. Truth is supreme.

3. Summary:

- Grace without truth is **sentimentalism, sloppy-agape** (theological liberalism).
- Truth without grace is **legalism, a sledge hammer** (Javert, in *Les Misérables*).
- Without grace, there is no **hope** of salvation; without truth, there is no **need**.

C. Both/and.

1. Using the Hebrew terms *hesed* (steadfast love, mercy) and *emet* (truth, loyalty), the Old Testament describes who God is:

- “The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love [*hesed*] and faithfulness [*emet*]’” (Ex 34:6).
- “All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love [*hesed*] and faithfulness [*emet*], for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies” (Ps 25:10).
- “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love [*hesed*] and faithfulness [*emet*] go before you” (Ps 89:14).
- “You will show faithfulness [*emet*] to Jacob and steadfast love [*hesed*] to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old” (Mi 7:20).

2. Jesus is obviously in **the image of** his Father! He too is full of grace and truth. But with Jesus we have a **human person!**

- *All grace*. He **welcomed sinners**, prostitutes, and tax collectors. He had compassion on the marginalized and oppressed (lepers, lame, blind, hungry, widows, foreigners, children, etc.).
- *All truth*. He was uncompromising in his preaching. He condemned religious hypocrisy. He often warned of **God's wrath**, coming judgment, and hell. He never hid the cost of what was involved in discipleship.

3. This is not easy! This is hard. This **hurts!**

Life is much simpler when we choose either/or. We then have a **formula** for how to think and how to respond. Either we will be gracious or we will be truthful. But in Jesus, we have a picture of someone who is both, simultaneously, in every situation, in a perfect manner. Jesus lived **in the tension**. He embraced the **paradox**.³

4. This is **redemptive!**

In Jesus, we realize that being full of grace and truth is **the key** to redemption. To transform a bad situation or to save a person from sin or some other destructive circumstance requires more than applying grace—or applying truth. Salvation comes only when someone incarnates the “and.”

³ A paradox is a statement that seems self-contradictory; when two concepts are put side by side that are, at least on the surface, incompatible and mutually exclusive.

5. How it works!

Follow Jesus through the Gospel of John and you begin to see the redemptive power unleashed when an incarnation of 100% grace **and** 100% truth walks into the room:

- a. The wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1–11).
 - Full of truth—My hour has not yet come.
 - Full of grace—But I don't want this new bride to suffer from the social embarrassment of a malfunctioning beverage service at her reception.
- b. The cleansing of the temple (Jn 2:12–22).
 - Full of grace—I love my father's house and want others to love it, too.
 - Full of truth—But you have ruined worship! Zeal consumes me.
- c. Nicodemus (Jn 3:1–15).
 - Full of grace—I want you to be part of God's family.
 - Full of truth—You are a spiritually dead and ignorant Pharisee!
- d. The woman at the well (Jn 4:1–42).
 - Full of grace—I have living water for you.
 - Full of truth—You have had five husbands and are currently living in sin.
- e. The paralytic (Jn 5:1–17).
 - Full of grace—Get up, take up your bed, and walk.
 - Full of truth—Sin no more that nothing worse may happen to you.
- f. The feeding of the 5,000 (Jn 6:1–59).
 - Full of grace—He miraculously feeds a multitude (with 12 baskets of food left over).
 - Full of truth—You are seeking me because you want a bread-king. Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you.
- g. The woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:1–11).
 - Full of grace—He does not condemn but protects and delivers her.
 - Full of truth—Go, and from now on, sin no more.
- h. We could continue. Jesus' life illustrates what it looks like when one is full of grace *and* full of truth. He makes it look easy. But think again. Consider how each situation above demanded:
 - **Discernment.** There are no formulas or recipes. Each situation is different and demands a unique response.
 - **Courage.** It takes boldness to speak truth to your mother—or to a Pharisee. It takes boldness to show love to an adulteress.
 - **Living in the tension.** Jesus was fully committed to pleasing his Father and to building relationships with sinners. He would never, ever compromise the truth, and he would never, ever mistreat a human being. Rather than taking the easy road of choosing grace **or**

truth, he embraced the tension and stepped forward, trusting for divine guidance as he went.

- **Suffering.** There is no way around it. To be full of grace *and* full of truth means feeling pain all the time.

6. Where it ends.

Anyone who incarnates the fullness of grace and the fullness of truth will, of necessity and by definition, live a life that is **cruciform**. The cross will define such a life. John 1:14 prepares us for what happens on Calvary where we witness a **cosmic collision** of absolute grace and absolute truth.

Steadfast love [hesed] and faithfulness [emet] meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other. (Psalm 85:10)

Two realities are manifest:

- No **pain** is greater than this.

The Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, where the warm waters of Indian Ocean meet the cold waters of the Atlantic, is a very **turbulent** place!

- The **redemption** of the world is now possible.

The drama of Calvary has a **purpose!** When grace and truth embrace, broken lives can be redeemed.

III. So what?

OK. In Christ, on Calvary especially, the fullness of cosmic mercy and the fullness of cosmic truth have collided and intermingled. That sounds a bit theoretical. Are there any **practical** ramifications? I am so glad you asked! There are two huge implications that flow from this:

A. Your **salvation** and mine are now possible.

There is no salvation without perfect grace and perfect truth coming together. **Grace alone** is not enough. **Truth alone** is not enough. It is the combination that makes possible:

- A right standing with God (justification).
- Victory over sin (sanctification).
- Restoration of the image of God (filling with the Holy Spirit).

B. We are called to be **imitators** of Christ. “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (Jn 20: 21). Just as Jesus was full of grace and truth, so you and I are called to incarnate the same reality (though on a human level). When we do this, two things happen:

- We reflect the **image of God** and walk as Jesus walked.
- We feel some of **the same pain** that Jesus feels. We participate (at a human level) in the redemptive work of God in the world today. This is how salvation comes to the world:

Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. (Colossians 1:24)

Let not steadfast love [hesed] and faithfulness [emet] forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. (Proverbs 3:3)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the primary lesson you learned from this lesson?
2. Describe someone you know (or perhaps a church community) who could be called a "grace without truth" person. What lessons can be learned from this negative example?
3. Describe someone you know (or perhaps a church community) who could be called a "truth without grace" person. What lessons can be learned from this negative example?
4. Describe someone you know who is full of grace *and* full and truth. What lessons can be learned from this positive example?
5. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you? What would it take for you to begin to live a life that is both full of grace *and* full of truth?
6. After completing this study, how do you feel about the author's claim that "and" is the most important word in the gospel?



Joy to the World

By Isaac Watts (1719)

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing.*

*Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.*

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.*



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ANSWERS

Who's Your Daddy?

- I. (A) God, damaged; (B) Adam; his image; all; depraved; bent; incapacity; inability; every; only; continually; deceitful; heart; (C) Satan; worse; (C1) liar; first; reliability; accuracy; consequences; character; (C2) murderer; death; kill, steal, destroy; (D) harder
- III. sin; true nature; cure; (A1) attitudes; Pride; Lustful thoughts; Lack of love; Partiality (where is the man?); (A2) don't know; self-deception; (A3) death; cancer; (A4) slavery; (A4a) Repetition; (A4b) self-reproach; (A4c) Vows; (A4e) denial; (A4f) obsessions; (A4g) Compulsivity; (A5) genetic; real father; murderer; liar; (B1a) Deny; (B1d) Blame; (B1f) behavior modification; (B1g) messenger; (B2a) the light; cleanses; truth encounter; don't know; very good liar; (B2b) Believe; takes away; (B2c) born of God; nature; (B2d) Abide

Here's Mud in Your Eye

- I. (A) eyes; (A1) Light; (A2) Sight; (B) epistemology; eyes; (C) simple; profound; (D) no; no; sign; (E1) telling the story; (E2) surprising; sees clearly; completely blind; (E3) blinds; shadows; judgment; did not; could not
- II. (A) knowledge; (A1) ignorance; (A2) confidence; (B) progress; man; prophet; from God; worships; (C) sin; caused; spiritual; judgment
- III. (A) hope; humble; (A1) honestly; (A2) willfully; running out; (B1) God who sees me; we are seen; (B2) opened her eyes; already provided; (B3) dangers; opened the eyes; unaware; (B4) open his eyes; resources; (B5) absence; at your table; (B6) not seen; he exists; rewards; seen them; looking; seeing; every situation; (C) Ask; gift of faith; humbly; blinded; darkness; shine on you

Finding the Door

- I. (A) symbolic power; literature; (A1) glimpse; (A2) passage; (A3) shut in; shut out; (A4) begin; end; (A5) narrow; (A6) choice; (A7) sermon
- II. (A) Garden of Eden; wall of separation; door was shut; homesick; (B) the ark; shut in; shut out; only; (C) Tower of Babel; heaven's gate; futility; judgment; confusion; (D) Jacob's Ladder; by God; gate of heaven; blindness; on the Son of Man; (E) Tabernacle; illustrate; (E1) gate; (E2) door; (E3) veil; cherubim; top to bottom; new and living way; (F) Ezekeiel's Temple; shut; under the door; door; water; (G) Revelation; worship service; disappeared; tree of life; shut in; hell; (H) Jesus; is; only; abundant
- III. (A) a door; (B) open; (C) only one; narrow; small enough; (D) shut; horrible; (E) receive; believe; (F) witnessing; keys

Predestined to Choose!

- I. (B) the surface; (B1) sheep; (B2) good shepherd; (C) below the surface; the Order of Salvation; sequence; mind of God; responsibility of man; (D: Note 1) Ezekiel 34:1–24; God himself; (D: Note 2) recognizes the voice; lays down his life
- II. believe; works; among my sheep; hear; I know them; never perish; has given them; (A) undecided; evidence; (B) lack of evidence; Jesus is on trial; willful blindness; (C) Believing is seeing; (D) irrational; jump; (E1) Predestination; (E2) Election; (E3) Calling; (E4) Faith; (E5) Perseverance; (G) foreknew; predestined; called; glorified
- III. (A) before you were born; robot; (B) Prevenient; enlightens every man; (C) their name; a choice; (D) merit; the gift of God; (E) inner transformation; (F) his hold on me; apostasy; (G) we shall be like him
- IV. (A) their own destiny; self is sovereign; (B) grace; evidence; (C) relationship; Today; hear his voice

The Emotional Jesus

- I. do not know me; (A) their own image; (A1) mystical; (A2) hippie; (A3) trendy; (A4) social action; (A5) political; (A6) nice; (A7) therapeutic; (A8) American dream; (B) another Jesus; (C) emotions; dispassionate; (C1) salvation; (C2) our own emotions
- II. (Note 1) his name; (Note 2) faith; unbelief; who Jesus is; seeing; (Note 3) good sermon; for the people; all; (Note 4) differences; (Note 4a) get out; get in; (Note 4b) others helped him; collapsed; neatly folded; Note 4c) resuscitation; reamination; physical; spiritual body
- III. emphasizes; deeply moved; greatly troubled; wept; deeply moved; (A1) Anger; grief; others weeping; results of sin; His own death; triggers; grief; (A1a) hypocrisy; consume; (A1b) willful; grieved; (A1c) children; indignant; (A1d) mediocrity; nauseated; Lamb; righteous indignation; right reasons; right way; grief; (A2) turmoil/agitation; churns in turmoil; (A3) Grief/sorrow; contrast; wailing; sobbing; unique; external; (B) perfectly; fully human; sanctify

The Hour Has Come

- I. (A) electric chair; (B) cruciform; the key; (C) centrality; must suffer; give his life; lays down his life; crucified; the cross
- II. (A) timing; (A1) not yet; (A2) has come; (B) the mission/purpose; Lamb of God; take away sin; giving his life; cross; Passover; incarnation; atonement; revolutionary; (C) three events; [First Event column] burial; [Second Event column] donkey; [Third Event column] Greeks; (D1) gets it; theologian; (D2) secretive; donkey; (D3) signal; world; (D4) inner turmoil
- III. experience; (A) the reason; taken; freely gave; from; through; strange; (B) upside-down; glorified; exalted; lifted up; throne; reversal; Power; Success; Glory; Wisdom; Wealth; Life; (C) welcomes; exclude; other sheep; chosen people; the world; inward; outward;

(D) a decision; judgment; neutral; today; too late; (E) our model; deny himself; his cross; cruciform; bears much fruit; when you live; life; the key; victory

Blinded by Light

- I. (B1) public; crystal clear; plain sight; (B2) didn't recognize; highlights
- II. (A) so many signs; did not believe; the arm of the Lord; could not believe; (A1) public; verifiable; How much evidence; (A2) choose; free; not free; (A3) surprised; (B) see; light; believes; (B1) to see; love the light; (B2) the truth; love the darkness; blinding; decision; blinded by light
- III. (A) the wrong things; the truth; public opinion; image; the darkness; Jesus; exposes; reveals; guides; (B) hear his voice; listening; (C) define himself; forbids; renewal; (D) cause and effect; seeing; believed; see; (E) to get our own way; humility; want his will; (F) the wrong way; know him; (G) he came to offer; sin of the world
- IV. willful unbelief; (1) hear; (2) see; (3) decision

Water, Water, Everywhere

- I. water; sign; (A1) Spirit; face; (A2) the flood; baptism; (A3) opened her eyes; (A4) blood; wine; (A5) through the water; (A6) from a rock; (A7) rain; (B) Wash me; thirsts for you; no money; does not satisfy; fountain; no water; clean; (C) geography; (C1) Jerusalem; springs; rain; (C2a) receives; gives; (C2b) Dead; (D1) blessing; (D2) life; (D3) Cleansing; (D4) thirst
- II. (A1) Baptism; (A2) purification; (A3) birth; (A4) quench thirst; (A5) healing; (A6) thirsty; (A7) water; (B1) Cleansing; (B2) Satisfying our thirst; (C) Life
- III. (A) context; Tabernacles; rain; shouts; thirsts; the Scripture has said; Spirit; (B1a) a river; (B1b) pour water; (B1c) pour out; (B1d) from the house; (B1e) living waters; no rain; (B1f) from the throne; (B2) Ezekiel 47:1-12; in ruins; new temple; (B2a) direction; most desolate; (B2b) increase; trickle; engulfed; (B2c) power; transform; hopeless; dead; open our eyes

The Most Important Word in the Gospel

- I. (A) John; Chapter 1; verse 14; word; (B1) Trinity; revelation; (B2) incarnation; atonement; (B3) immutability; (B4) Emmanuel; (B5) shekinah; (B6) only begotten; (C) and; and; (D1) genius; tyranny; (D2) and; (D3) grace-and-truth; (D4) full of; (D5) unchanged; new reality
- II. (A) incompatible; (A1) steadfast love; relationship; (A2) justice; never changes; (B) polarities; (B1) God is love; nice; tolerance; (B2) God is light; compromise; (B3) sentimentalism, sloppy-agape; a sledge hammer; (C2) the image of; human person; welcomed sinners; God's wrath; (C3) hurts; formula; in the tension; paradox; (C4) redemptive; the key; (C5) and; (C5h) Discernment; Courage; Living in the tension; or; Suffering; (C6) cruciform; cosmic collision; pain; turbulent; redemption; purpose
- III. practical; (A) salvation; Grace alone; Truth alone; (B) imitators; image of God; the same pain



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NOTES



Where Shall My Wondering Soul Begin

By Charles Wesley

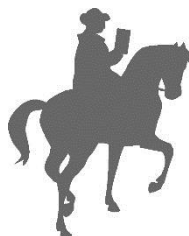
*Where shall my wondering soul begin?
How shall I all to heaven aspire?
A slave redeemed from death and sin,
A brand plucked from eternal fire,
How shall I equal triumphs raise,
And sing my great deliverer's praise?*

*O how shall I the goodness tell,
Father, which thou to me hast showed?
That I, a child of wrath and hell,
I should be called a child of God!
Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,
Blest with this antepast of heaven!*

*Outcasts of men, to you I call,
Harlots and publicans and thieves;
He spreads his arms to embrace you all,
Sinners alone his grace receive.
No need of him the righteous have;
He came the lost to seek and save.*

*Come, O my guilty brethren, come,
Groaning beneath your load of sin;
His bleeding heart shall make you room,
His open side shall take you in.
He calls you now, invites you home:
Come, O my guilty brethren, come.*

*For you the purple current flowed
In pardon from his wounded side,
Languished for you the eternal God,
For you the Prince of Glory died.
Believe, and all your guilt's forgiven,
Only believe—and yours is heaven.*



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