



overview: the gospel of john

Answer the questions together as a group to get an overview of the Gospel of John.

Discussion starter (5 minutes)

Share with your group one thing you already know and like about the Gospel of John or one thing you are hoping to learn about the Gospel of John this year or one reason why you want to study this book of the Bible.

who wrote the gospel of john?

1. The author of the Gospel of John does not name himself in the text, yet he does refer to himself. Read the following verses and write the phrase the author uses to describe himself.

John 21: 20-24

John 13:23-25

John 19:26-27

John 20:2-8

- ♥ Why do you think the author refers to himself this way?
- ♥ From the verses just read, what else do we know about this disciple? What kind of person does he seem to be?

Since early Church history, **John**, one of the original twelve apostles is credited with writing the Gospel of John. **John** and his brother James, along with Peter and his brother Andrew, were the first disciples called by Jesus. **John** is thought to be a younger cousin of Jesus. His mother, Salome, was probably the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. In their hometown of Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, **John** and his brother James had a very successful family fishing business with their father Zebedee. **John** was a follower of John the Baptist before Jesus called them to be his disciple.

John was very close to Jesus and it seems he heard and saw more of Jesus' life and ministry than any other disciple. **John** was given preferred seating next to Jesus at the Last Supper and he was with Jesus during the Transfiguration as well as in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before the Crucifixion. Out of the twelve disciples, **John** is the only one who stayed with Jesus during the Crucifixion. While he was dying on the cross, Jesus asked **John** to take care of his own mother, Mary. Jesus and **John** had a close relationship and the Gospel of John is full of details not told in any of the other three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

After Jesus' Ascension, **John** became one of the leaders of the early Christian church in Jerusalem. Tradition says that he later lived in Ephesus, probably after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. **John** was not martyred for his faith like some of the other apostles, but at one point, the Roman government exiled him to the island of Patmos. After he was released from exile, he returned to Ephesus where he stayed until his death. While living in Ephesus, he wrote the Gospel of John and three letters or epistles that we refer to as 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. He also wrote the book of Revelation which is a record of the end-of-the-world vision he received from God while exiled on the island of Patmos.

- ♥ **Something to think about:** John describes himself in terms of his relationship to Jesus, *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. How would you describe yourself in terms of *your* relationship to Jesus?

why was the gospel of John written?

2. The Apostle John clearly states his purpose for writing this account of Jesus' earthly life. Open your Bibles to **John 20:30-31** and have someone read the verses out loud. Put into your own words the author's two-fold purpose.

Purpose 1:

Purpose 2:

3. Who is the "you" in **John 20:31**?
- ♥ How does that make you feel about studying the Gospel of John?
4. Looking again at **John 20:30-31**, does John mean for his story to be a complete account of Jesus' life? Explain your answer.

What seems to be the John's reason for including some events but leaving others out?

According to **John 20:30**, to what should we pay special attention as we read and study the Gospel of John?

5. Miraculous signs or miracles could just be "tall tales" or folklore. According to **John 20:30**, why can John tell this story with authority?
6. The author of the Gospel of John says he wants the reader to "believe". The word believe is used almost 100 times in this gospel. Some common definitions for our English word *believe* are:
 - to accept that something is true or real
 - to accept that somebody is telling the truth
 - to be of the opinion that something exists or is a reality
 - to have a religious belief

Have someone read **John 20:31** from the *Amplified Version* provided below. Discuss with your group how the expanded definition of the word translated *believe* (taken from the original Greek word) is different than our commonly held definitions of the English word *believe*.

John 20:31 Amplified

But these are written (recorded) in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (the Anointed One), the Son of God, and that through believing and cleaving to and trusting and relying upon Him you may have life through (in) His name [through Who He is].

- ♥ What does it mean to "*believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*" if you use the English definition of believe, and what does it mean to "*believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*" if you use the Greek definition of the word?
- ♥ What are some reasons why it's so important to believe in the identity of Jesus – that he is the Christ, the Son of God? (**John 20:31**)
- ♥ Explain what you think it means "to have life in Jesus' name"? (**John 20:31**)

who is Jesus?

The *Gospel of John* was written towards the end of John's life, many years after the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were written. John wanted to write an account of Jesus' life that was different from the other accounts. His main goal was to clearly show that although Jesus was an actual human person (that some of his early readers would have actually known), he was also divine – the Son of God – God Himself.

- ♥ One way to reveal a person's identity is to cite their *genealogy*. Both Matthew and John begins their gospels with the a genealogy of Jesus. How are these two genealogies different?

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7. John reveals Jesus' identity by giving seven *I Am . . .* statements of Jesus; seven *Witnesses* who testify to Jesus' identity; and seven *Miraculous Signs* that prove Jesus is God. Fill in the charts below to get an overview of who Jesus is.

Scripture	<i>I Am . . .</i>
John 6:35	
John 8:12	
John 10:7	
John 10:11	
John 11:25	
John 14:6	
John 15:1	

Scripture	Who or What Testifies to Jesus' Identity
John 5:37	
John 8:14, 18	
John 15:26	
John 5:39-40	
John 1:6-8	
John 5:36; 10:25	
John 15:27	

Scripture	Miraculous Signs that Prove Jesus' Divine Power
John 2:1-11	
John 4:46-54	
John 5:1-9	
John 6:1-14	
John 6:15-21	
John 9:1-12	
John 11:1-44	

- ♥ The word "gospel" means *good news*. What did you learn today that makes the Gospel of John *good news* for you?