



The Gospel of John – HEAC TERM 1 2018

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Notes for Leaders...

These studies are a 'tool'...

Studies are always very hard to write! If you've been in a Bible study long enough, then you know that pre-prepared studies are often 'hit and miss'. This study series is no exception! To get the most out of these studies you must view them as a 'tool'. If as a leader you do not do the preparatory work each week, then your time in the Scriptures will not be as fruitful. In light of that, feel free to adjust and add/remove questions as you see fit. Many of the questions are simple comprehension questions and require a leader's guidance to get the most out of them. You know your group better than anyone else, so feel free to adapt the studies to your group. This will be especially necessary for the application/implication questions at the end of each study. These questions are often broad and at times vague. As the leader of your group you will need to change and adapt them.

Guides for these studies

You will note that after each question there are 'leaders' comments provided. These are to help you understand where the question is coming from. These comments are *not* comprehensive, but they are a good starting point and will hopefully aid the study. The questions (and 'leaders' comments) rely heavily upon resources from St Helen's London (used with permission). In order of use/importance, resources for leaders can be downloaded from:

<http://www.theword121.com/buyordownload> (See the download at the bottom)

<http://city.st-helens.org.uk/resources/truth-at-work>

These two resources overlap in many ways. They will be hugely helpful in guiding you.

You may also like to purchase a commentary. The most helpful 'non-technical' commentary would be:

'The Message of John' from the 'Bible Speaks Today' (BST) series. It is written by Bruce Milne

Any Questions?

If you have any questions to do with these studies please feel free to call or email me.

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Week 1. Catch-Up Week! John 8 – 13

Where we ended in Term 4... John 8

In John Chapter 8 Jesus is still at the Feast of Booths speaking to the hostile Pharisees, extending his offer of salvation to 'whoever' will follow him. In the first half of chapter 8 Jesus reiterates the fact that those who are hostile to him are from this world and therefore cannot follow him. But the second half of the chapter contains a far greater shock: even the faith of those 'many' who appear to believe in him is exposed by Jesus to be phoney and horrific. Ultimately ALL people belong to one of two families, with one of two fathers.

1. In reading John 8:42-47 what are the two families, and who are the two fathers?

Jesus' words here are shocking and strong. Yet, this is the reality of our world. It is a great encouragement for us who follow Jesus as Lord and Saviour. We belong to God the Father! It is a great warning for all those who do not yet follow Jesus – they belong to the devil.

2. How does John 8 finish, and what is the meaning behind Jesus' words in verse 58?

What it means to 'see'... John 9

In chs 5-8 we've seen extreme hostile reaction to Jesus from God's historic people the Jews, both from opponents and from those who initially 'believed'. Jesus has exposed their illogical hypocrisy and their true state as 'children of the devil'. Jesus has continued to make amazing offers of rescue but we're left with the question - if even these Jews won't accept him, is there a problem with Jesus' work and mission? Chs 9-10 provide the answer. In ch 9 Jesus demonstrates that his work does achieve true belief, eg in the blind man who miraculously becomes progressively more spiritually sighted, but his work also brings 'blindness', eg in those Jews who reject Jesus and become progressively more resistant.

3. Read John 9:39-41. This is the great summary verse of chapter 9. What do you think Jesus means by his comment?
4. To rightly understand Jesus' words we need to see the difference between the blind man and the Pharisees. Very briefly, what happens with the blind man, and how does he 'see' Jesus (see verses 11, 15, 17, 33, 38)?

5. How do the Pharisees 'see' in contrast (see verses 16, 18, 22, 24, 28, 29)?

It takes a miracle to see!

As Jesus gives sight, will we follow the evidence where it leads and end up recognizing Jesus for who He is... leading to worshipping Him, as did the man born blind?

Or

We delude ourselves that we can see... showing ourselves to be proud... and opening ourselves to the prospect of Jesus judging us by confirming our blindness.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd – John 10

Chapter 9 demonstrated that Jesus, the 'light of the world', does give miraculous spiritual 'sight' to those who know they need rescue, and also judges those who refuse to believe in him by 'blinding' them spiritually. Chapter 10 explains that, rather than being a failure, Jesus is in total control of his mission and it is part of God's plan. Jesus is the true 'Shepherd' who determines who is part of the true 'flock'. Jesus will rescue (by laying down his life), protect and lovingly lead his people. He also exposes as false 'shepherds' all alternatives, including the unbelieving Jewish leaders who persecuted the blind man, and exposes as false sheep those who refuse to accept him.

Sadly we do not have the time in this overview study to explore the OT background of John 10. If we did, we would spend a lot of our time in Ezekiel 34 (regardless, you should read Ezekiel 34 during the week and then read John chapter 10!). The contrast in the chapter is between the Pharisees failure at being shepherds of the flock, and Jesus as the Good and True Shepherd of God's people.

6. Read John 10:1-18 and share briefly some of the qualifications of the Good Shepherd.

7. What does it mean to be 'true' sheep of the Good Shepherd, and what are the benefits of belonging to the Good Shepherd (see verse 27-29)

The death and raising of Lazarus – John 11

In line with his aim (stated in ch 20v31), John has showed us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (chs 1-4), and what it means to truly believe in him (chs 5-10). In chs 11-21 we now see that Jesus really can give the life that he has been promising to give (10.10 & 10.28). The section begins with Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (ch 11) and ends with his own resurrection in ch 20. Jesus really can give LIFE!

However, the section repeatedly emphasises the death of Jesus – the way that he will be able to give life is through his own death...

In ch 11 John introduces this key theme of 'life' by showing that those who already believe in Jesus still have much to learn about him. Martha may recognise him as 'the Christ, the Son of God', but she hasn't yet understood what it means for him to be 'the resurrection and the life.' The raising of Lazarus from the dead will reveal God's glory in that Jesus can deal with the greatest problem facing the human race – death...

8. In chapter 11 Lazarus dies so that God's glory may be displayed. Read verses 40-44. How is God's glory shown?

9. Read Jesus' words to Martha in verses 25-26. How does the story of Lazarus point to a greater truth?

Resurrection life is only possible through Jesus' death – John 12

Chapter 12 follows closely on the events of chapter 11, with the crowds who witnessed Lazarus' being raised from the dead still telling others about it (12vs9, 17), while the religious leaders are still trying to suppress the story (12vs10-11).

Chapter 11 proved that Jesus really is 'the resurrection and the life'; able to give the concrete, real eternal life that he has been promising to give. But Caiaphas' prophecy in 11v50 also made a link between this life and Jesus' death on behalf of many others.

Chapter 12 makes it even clearer that the rich 'life' that Jesus brings can only come through his death – this is the 'hour' that Jesus has been waiting for, the moment of his glory.

Chapter 12:20-36 emphasise the central purpose and huge achievements of Jesus' death – glory for both Jesus and his Father, the judgement of the world, the overthrow of Satan, the drawing of all kinds of people to God.

We also come to the end of Jesus' public ministry as people refuse to believe and the Cross seems to be the final stumbling block.

10. What references are made to Jesus' death in this chapter (see verses 7, 23-26, 32-33)?

11. What is Jesus' appeal and warning to how people are to respond to his coming death (read verses 44-50)?

The eve of Jesus' death – The Upper Room Discourse – John 13

Chapters 13-17 (known as 'the Upper Room Discourse') are set on the eve of Jesus' death. This section is much more personal than previous settings, as Jesus now teaches believers/disciples – his 'own' – in private rather than his public words to the unbelieving world in general. Chapters 13-17 show us much more of what it means in practice for Jesus' disciples to follow him, God's King who dies to bring life.

As people conspire to kill Jesus, he wants his disciples to be in no doubt that he is in complete control of his death (13vs18-19, 21-30). It is only when Judas, the traitor, leaves the room that Jesus will begin to make more things plain to his true followers. Before he sets out the main bulk of his teaching to his disciples, Jesus first makes clear in chapter 13vs1-30 that if his disciples want to serve him, they must first let Jesus serve them personally by washing them clean through his death. Only then are they called to serve other believers in the same humble and generous way that Jesus has served them...

12. Read verses 5-11. How did Jesus serve his disciples, and why did he do it?
(verse 8)

13. Jesus has loved us and so he encourages us follow his example and love one another. What reasons are there to love each other like Jesus loved us?

We've covered A LOT of material very briefly! Why not make it your aim to read a chapter a day from John 8 to John 13 this week?

Week 2. Don't you know me? – John 14

Jesus has withdrawn from the crowds, Judas has left to betray him and it is the night before his crucifixion. He is teaching his own disciples about the implications of his death and departure for them. So far in answer to Peter and Thomas' questions Jesus has assured his disciples that his death means they will be "Welcomed" into eternity with him because he is the "Way" through his death. Now in answer to Philip and Judas' questions he underlines the privileged position they will have because of his death as they "Wait" for his return and he also explains the position of the "World".

The Disciples Questions (13:36-14:11)

Read John 13:36-14:4

1. Disciple Question 1: The scene begins with Peter's question. What is his question and how do we understand Jesus' answer. What does Jesus mean?
2. Disciple Question 2: Thomas asks Jesus the same question we might ask in his position (14:5)! He wants to be clear on 'the way' and on what Jesus means. How does Jesus answer Thomas' question and how do we understand this most famous saying of Jesus (14:6-7)?
3. Disciple Question 3: Jesus has mentioned that they 'know' the Father. What is Philip therefore requesting in his question in 14:8? How does Jesus answer this latest disciple question (14:9-11)?

What it means to know Jesus (14:12-21)

Read John 14:12-21

4. What is the privilege for those who believe in Jesus in verses 12-14?
5. What does it look like to know and love Jesus (v15-21)? What help will we have in living in a way that knows and loves Jesus?

One Final Disciple Question...

Read John 14:22-30

6. Judas (not Iscariot!) asks Jesus why they will know Jesus but not the world. Jesus answers in three parts.

What is Jesus' answer in verses 23-24?

What is Jesus' answer in verses 25-27?

What is Jesus' answer in verses 28-31

So how do the three parts of Jesus' response provide an answer to Judas' question?

Judas' question (v 22): 'But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?'

Jesus' response:

Part 1: 'I will show myself to my people who love me' v 23

Part 2: The eleven Apostles will be given ability (by the Holy Spirit) to write down everything that Jesus has said and done. v26

Part 3: 'It is at the cross that you will see my love.' v 31

How can we be encouraged by remembering that Jesus went to the Father to prepare a plus *for us*? How does knowing we have a place in the Father's house help us to live now as followers of Jesus?

Sometimes like Philip we too want an epiphany or a sign! Jesus directs us back to his word and his deeds (which we read about in the Bible!) as the way to experience God. How can remembering this fact help us to read our Bibles more?

How can we be bolder in sharing the cross of Christ with people so that they can understand and see Jesus' love for them?

Week 3. Jesus and the Vine –

John 15:1-16:4

Since John 13:31 Jesus has been teaching his disciples about how they should live in light of his death and departure while they wait for his return. Until now, Jesus has been answering his disciples' questions and focusing on how he will provide for them even though they will be separated (13:33). Now in ch15-17 he focuses on preparing them for what it means for them to keep on fulfilling their role as his disciples bringing glory to God in the world in his absence (13:34-35). The first step (15:1-17) is to make sure they stay connected to him – God's means of bearing fruit in the world.

I am the True Vine

Read John 15:1-17

1. In Jesus saying 'I am the Vine' he is claiming to be *the* key to all the Old Testament promises which said that God would have a 'fruitful' people who bring glory to Him! He is all that Israel never managed to be. What does Jesus say about 'fruitfulness' in verse 2? What is the warning and the promise?
2. What is the key to 'fruitfulness'? Hint: the answer IS 'Jesus', but explore the richness of what Jesus is saying in verse 3-8.
3. How does 'remaining in Jesus' and being a part of 'the vine' show itself in our lives? Again, explore the richness of what Jesus is saying in verse 9-17 and how often 'love' is mentioned.

What the world thinks of the Vine and the Branches

Jesus is creating a new people within himself who will be characterised by their love for one another. This raises the question of how they'll be received by the world. So, Jesus now prepares them. The world will hate them as it hates him because the world hates and rejects his Father. This reaction is inevitable, and cannot be avoided, for God will not give up on the world. Instead he sends the disciples to be his witness. But Jesus promises that the Spirit of truth will be at work in the world to help the disciples, causing people to believe their testimony about their Master.

Read John 15:18-25

4. As Christians, *if* we are living boldly as Jesus' disciples, the world will hate us. What reason does Jesus give for the world hating Christians in verses 18-21, and why shouldn't we be surprised?

5. Ultimately, Jesus gives us the reason why they hate him, and hate his Father, and thus hate Christians. What is the reason in verses 22-25?

The Advocate and being prepared

Read John 15:26-16:4

6. How do verses 26-27 show us that God's truth will continue to be presented to the world that hates him?

7. Why is Jesus saying these things to his disciples (verse 1-4)? Remember who Jesus is speaking to here! Are his words true?

So many questions for us!

From 15:1-17 how are we 'remaining' in Christ? Do we work hard at holding to his word? Do we work hard at loving each other?

From 15:18-25 what comfort can we take from Jesus words when we are hated because of Christ?

From 15:26-16:4, while these words are specifically for the eleven, how are we going at testifying and being prepared?

3. As you have read and heard God's word, have you experienced the work of God the Holy Spirit showing up your sin?

The Spirit's work in the Apostles

Read John 16:12-15

4. Remember that Jesus is speaking SPECIFICALLY to the Apostles in these verses. We must be careful that we don't read ourselves too quickly into the text. What does Jesus say to his Apostles concerning the Spirit?

5. Considering that our New Testament are the writings of Jesus' Apostles, and 2 Peter 1:21 (*No prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation, ²¹ because no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*), how much confidence can WE have in light of Jesus' words about the Spirit and His Apostles?

The work of the Spirit and Us...

We can often be challenged by other people's opinions and worldviews which are contrary to our Christian world view. How does what we read in John 11 give us confidence in what WE believe, and confidence to lovingly question other people's worldviews?

How does John 11 give us confidence in sharing Jesus with other people in general?

In the past, some have claimed that the Spirit has spoken a 'new' word to them, a word in *addition* to what we have in the Bible. This is contrary to what Jesus says here - Jesus has led His Apostles into all His truth by the work of His Spirit, which they have written down for us. How encouraging is it to know that God has given us in the Bible all the He needs and wants to say to us?

Week 5. Our relationship with the Father through Jesus - John 16:16-33

Throughout the Upper Room Discourse (ch13-17) Jesus has been speaking to his disciples about how he will provide for them (and other believers) to have life in his name (John 20.31) after his death and departure. He covers two big areas 1) the disciples' relationship with the Father and 2) the disciples' role in the world. The last passage focussed on the 2nd of these and this passage focuses on the first. Jesus fleshes out the details of what the believer's relationship with him will look like once Jesus has gone. He teaches them of the rich, privileged access they will have to God the Father. Nobody but Jesus has had such intimate, unlimited access to God like this until now, but he will open up this relationship to all his disciples through his death and resurrection.

Now you see me, now you don't...

Read John 16:16-19

1. These verses are very repetitive and slightly confusing! Try to see past the repetition and 'wordiness'. What is the simple point Jesus is making?

Jesus' death will bring...

Read John 16:20-22

2. Keep remembering that Jesus here is speaking to his Apostles. What are the two emotions that Jesus says they will experience? Why is one temporal, and the other 'will never be taken away'?

Read John 16:23-28

3. In light of Jesus' death and resurrection we will have a new relationship with the Father. This is not JUST for the Apostles, but for all of God's people. How does Jesus describe that relationship?
4. How does Jesus describe the relationship in verses 27? Reflect on how amazing this is... really, think about it!

Read John 16:29-33

5. The disciples now seem to understand Jesus. However, what does Jesus say they will do in verse 32? How might we need to be careful in how we 'believe' and act in light of Jesus' words?

6. What are the two things that the disciples (and in reality, US!) will have in verse 33?

The normal Christian Experience

From these verses –the normal Christian experience doesn't mean everything will be rosy. In fact, Jesus says the Christian life will bring trouble. But, in the middle of that, the Christian can have great peace and joy from God, because Jesus has 'overcome the world'.

Where does this joy and peace come from?

What, then, should we say in the following situations?

Someone says: 'The normal Christian experience is health, wealth and success.'

Someone says: 'I feel no joy and peace.'

Someone says: 'It seems like Bible Christians have no vibrant Christian experience. It's a head knowledge and book work!'

Week 6. Jesus Prays – John 17

In chapters 11-13 we've seen that Jesus' death brings life. Throughout chapter 13-16 (the Upper Room Discourse) Jesus has been showing his disciples what this life will involve after his departure. Now as Jesus prays he draws together the big themes of the upper room discourse – his death bringing glory to the Father, providing relationship with the Father, the need for his disciples to persevere in the face of persecution, his followers abiding in his word and so bearing fruit in the world... In doing so he sums up his greatest concerns.

Jesus' mission to the world

Read John 17:1-5

1. What does Jesus ask the Father for in these verses? What will Jesus do for the Father? And how will Jesus do it?

2. What does verse 5 tell us about Jesus?

What Jesus wants for his Apostles

Read John 17:6-19

3. In verses 6-10 Jesus is praying particularly for his Apostles. What do we learn about them in these verses?

4. How does Jesus' prayer in 6-10 about his Apostles give us confidence in what we read in the New Testament?

5. Jesus continues to pray for his Apostles on verses 11-19. What are the things Jesus prays for them, and why do they get such particular prayer from Jesus?

What Jesus wants for his church

Read John 17:20-26

6. Jesus now prays for all believers (v20). What does Jesus pray for in verses 20-21?
Note – there are a few things, but they are all connected! Think it through as a group
😊

7. What is Jesus praying for in verses 24, and how is that an encouragement?

Thinking about unity...

If Jesus prays for unity, why is it that the church can often appear to be so dis-united?

How does disunity come about, and what things lead to disunity?

If part of the means God uses to show himself to his world is through the unity of his people, how might we better show our unity in the truth for the sake of the lost?

Week 7. Jesus came to die as our substitute – John 18:1-27

After the lengthy conversation between Jesus and his disciples where he prepared them for his departure and explained the implications of his death in ch13-17, the action now resumes.

But as we switch back to the narrative we should keep in mind what Jesus has taught his disciples to help us understand what the action is achieving so we understand how Jesus' death is able to bring life. He is the sacrificial Lamb of God (ch1.29) who takes away the sin of the world. Given what we've been told so far we should always be asking ourselves - how do these events, at his 'hour', reveal his glory?

A planned death...

Read John 18:1-11

1. In what ways that John show us that Jesus is the one in control in his own arrest?
2. Why do you think they draw back in verse 6? You might need to remember other instances in John's Gospel of Jesus using 'I AM'
3. Peter is noble, but he continues to misunderstand why Jesus came. Why did Jesus come (v11)? Read Isaiah 51:22 to help you understand.

Death in our place...

Read John 18:12-27

4. Why does John remind us of Caiaphas in verse 14 (re-read John 11:49-53 to refresh your memory)? What is the one, little, very important word in verse 14?

5. What is Peter like in these verses? Is this a surprise given his words in John 13:37 that he would 'lay down his life' for Jesus? No doubt Peter was bold and committed to Jesus! What do we learn about him and us in these verses?

6. How does Jesus compare to Peter in verses 19-24? What does Jesus do that we, like Peter, cannot?

Some things to consider...

7. What was your view of why Jesus died before you started reading through John?

8. Has your view changed? If so, how?

9. What was your view of yourself before you read through John?

10. Has your view changed? If so, how?

11. What is Jesus offering to us in today's section of John?

Week 8. A helpful exercise in Bible reading! John 18:28 – 21:25

John's Gospel was written to be read from start to finish. In our two terms, we haven't the weeks to study every section of John's Gospel. However, we would do ourselves a disservice if we didn't read it all as a group! This week will be an exercise in Bible reading!

Read the context statement before every section (to orientate yourself and the 'big idea')
Share the one thing that struck you the most after each section.

John 18 and 19

As we read about Jesus' arrest, trial and execution in chapters 18-19 we can expect John to show us what the action means. We don't have to guess! John wants us to view each stage of the action in light of the explanations of Jesus' death, his identity and mission, etc that he has already given us in chapters 1- 17. So keeping in mind all he has said about the following will help us see that now the 'hour' has actually come. John intends for us to believe (19v35) what he has already explained.

- Jesus' absolute sovereignty and control over his death (eg 10vs17-18, 16v28)
 - Jesus' purpose in coming to earth is to accomplish God's plan to rescue people and give eternal life, and entry to his eternal 'not of this world' kingdom as Scripture promised (eg 3v15-16, 4v14, 5v46, 14v1-3)
 - Jesus is the true Passover Lamb/substitute who will bear God's wrath in the place of guilty people (eg 1v29, 11v50, 13)
 - Jesus is God's King/Messiah (eg 1v41, 4v25-26, 12v13)
 - Humanity is exposed and judged by Jesus (eg 1v10-11. 3v19-21, 12v31)

Read John 18 and 19

John 20

We should read this passage in light of everything we've already been told in John about Jesus' work, the life he will bring and the nature of true belief. Jesus has clearly said that he is "the resurrection and the life" (ch11) and that he will rise again (14v19 & 16v16-22). John has also told us that it is when Jesus is raised from the dead that his disciples would finally understand all that Jesus has been saying (2v22, 12v16). Ch 11-12 showed us through Jesus' powerful raising of Lazarus from the dead and the subsequent discourse that Jesus would bring life through his death.

So now, Jesus' actual resurrection is proof and confirmation that Jesus really is God's eternal king, able to give eternal life through his completed work on the Cross as the sacrificial lamb. Also, as John shows us that the resurrection definitely has happened and that we should take the eyewitnesses' word for it (20v29-31), by alluding to the rest of his Gospel,

he also reminds us and underlines for us what it means...eg - 1v12 – 20v17 ...entry to God's family. - 14vs1,27 & 16v33 – 20v19-23full cleansing from sin & therefore peace - 14v16-17, 16v4-15 - 20v22the Spirit will come meaning the Apostles can be witnesses and we can have a personal relationship with God

Read John 20

John 21

John concludes his Gospel brilliantly. John has prepared us in chapters 13-17 & 20 to expect the next stage of God's plan to bring eternal life to the world – it is now time for the Apostles to take their eyewitness account of Jesus' works and words to the world, helped by God's Spirit (ch20v20-23). But even after the resurrection appearances of ch20 we meet the disciples again back in Galilee – going fishing (v2-3) and perhaps still confused (v12). We can easily imagine them (even Thomas) unsure of what should happen now. Is he really alive, is he just like Lazarus, what will he do, what will we do, will he want anything to do with us? In chapter 21, in a way reminiscent of chapter 1 & perhaps 6, Jesus shows that he is the risen, sovereign, powerful Lord who will provide for his followers to feed on his death and resurrection work by believing his Word. He re- instates & re-commissions Peter (3 times – see ch18) (and, by implication, the rest of the Apostles) to 'feed' his people which given the context of John will happen as the disciples provide Jesus' words through their witness of his work (ch 6v54, 6v63, 10v16, 16v12-15, 20v31, 21v24).

Read John 21