

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

John



SERIES 3 - SIGNS & CONTROVERSIES

A Period of Conflict

LESSON STUDY GUIDES || JOHN 5:1-10:42

Series 3 — Signs, Claims, and Controversy

Lesson Study Guides

This guide works for both individual and group study. Each lesson is built around the same text as that Sunday's sermon and will be discussed in Bible class that morning. This is not a review of the sermon; no prior knowledge is necessary.

HOW TO USE THESE STUDY GUIDES

It is recommended that you complete the lesson before you arrive. Familiarity with the text before class makes for better conversation and a more rewarding experience for everyone in the room.

This guide is designed for one purpose: to get you into the text.

The **Questions from the Text** keep you anchored to what the passage says. These questions are based on the New King James Version and have clear answers that come straight from the text.

The **Thought-Provoking Questions** are meant to be sat with. There are no right or wrong answers in this section (generally speaking). Additionally, there is rarely a clean one-sentence answer.

The **Digging Deeper** studies invite you to trace words, places, people, and Old Testament background at whatever level of depth your time allows.

PRACTICAL STUDY TIPS

Set aside consistent time. Fifteen minutes a day is more sustainable than two hours on Saturday. You will get out of it what you put in. Begin with prayer and ask God to grant you wisdom as you search the Scriptures.

Approach the text with an open mind. Do not fall into the trap of making the Bible say what you want it to say. Approach it from the standpoint of trying to understand what God said.

Read slowly and repeatedly. Return to the same passage multiple times and you will notice things you previously missed. Pay attention to repeated words, key phrases, and Old Testament quotations.

Ask basic questions of the text. Who is speaking? Who is present? What is happening? Where does this take place? These simple questions (who, what, where, why) will carry you a long way before you ever open a commentary.

Look things up. When a word, person, place, or custom is unfamiliar, stop and study it. A Bible dictionary, a concordance, or online resource like blueletterbible.org will answer most questions.

Share what you learn. Study has a way of coming alive when you know you are going to tell someone about it. Whether in class, a small group, or a conversation at the dinner table, passing along what you have discovered is the natural end of good Bible study.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The Bible Project — thebibleproject.com — Free videos, posters, and reading plans for the Gospel of John. An excellent starting point for understanding the structure and themes of the book.

Blue Letter Bible — blueletterbible.org — Free word studies, original language tools, and cross-references. Particularly useful for tracing key words like *believe*, *life*, *light*, *sign*, and *glory* through John.

The ESV Study Bible — Thorough notes, maps, and book introductions. One of the most useful single-volume study tools available in print or digital form.

Lumo Project — Gospel of John — A filmed visual reading of the gospel in a first-century setting. Available on YouTube by searching "Lumo Project John."

BIBLE MARKING GUIDE

Marking your Bible is one of the most effective ways to slow down and engage with the text. The colors below are tied to the major themes running through John's gospel. Use them consistently as you read and over time the structure of John will begin to speak for itself.

RED: FOR STOP <i>Negative References</i>	Sin, darkness, unbelief, judgment, Satan, rejection, hatred, persecution
ORANGE: FOR CHANGE <i>Time References</i>	Hour, day, feast, Passover, "the next day," "my time has not yet come," before, after
GREEN: FOR GO <i>Positive References</i>	Believe, faith, follow, receive, obey, abide, eternal life, discipleship
BLUE: FOR DIVINITY <i>References to God</i>	God, Jesus, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Word, Messiah, Christ, I AM
PURPLE: FOR ROYALTY <i>God's Rule & Authority</i>	Kingdom, king, authority, glory, throne, sent, witness, reign
BROWN: FOR EARTHLY <i>People, Places & Things</i>	Disciples, Pharisees, crowds, Jerusalem, Galilee, Bethany, Cana, water, bread
PINK: FOR PASSION <i>Love & Relationship</i>	Love, loved, friend, prayer, compassion, family, shepherd, sheep, abide
BLACK: FOR WRITING <i>Notes & References</i>	Cross-references, observations, outlines, questions, applications
YELLOW: FOR KEY WORDS <i>Repeated Words</i>	Believe, life, light, truth, witness, glory, world, sent, Father, Son

KEY WORDS TO WATCH THROUGHOUT JOHN

Believe • Life • Light • Truth • Love • Glory • Witness • World • Father • Son • Sent

These words appear repeatedly throughout John.

KEY A FEW PRACTICAL TIPS

Use a fine-tipped highlighter or colored pencil. Markers can bleed through thin Bible pages.

Mark a word or two. Avoid highlighting entire verses with one color. Mark with purpose.

Black is for pencil only. Cross-references, questions, definitions, and outlines should be written with a pencil in the margins.

Some words can carry more than one color. "Eternal life" might be green (positive) and blue (connected to Jesus). Use your judgment.

Don't feel pressured to mark everything at once. Read the chapter multiple times, each time looking for something different.

Gospel of John Scripture Journal These are excellent ways to mark in your Bible. They have the text on one page and a blank page on the other side. The most popular is the ESV Scripture Journal.

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 10

Do You Want to Be Well?

John 5:1–18 • August 9, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. How long had the man at the pool of Bethesda been ill? (5:5)
2. What question did Jesus ask the man before healing him? (5:6)
3. What three things did Jesus tell the man to do when He healed him? (5:8)
4. Why did the Jewish leaders confront the man after he was healed? (5:10)
5. What reason did Jesus give for healing on the Sabbath? (5:17)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. Jesus asked a man who had been ill for thirty-eight years whether he wanted to be well. On the surface it seems like an obvious question. But there are people who have organized their lives around an illness, a wound, or a way of thinking that keeps them stuck. What does it take to honestly answer yes to that question?
2. The Jewish leaders saw a man healed after nearly four decades of suffering and their first response was to confront him for carrying his mat on the Sabbath. How can religious rules become a barrier to recognizing what God is actually doing? What makes it so hard to see from the inside?
3. Jesus found the healed man in the temple and told him, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you" (5:14). The man then went and told the leaders it was Jesus who healed him. What do you make of that response? Was it gratitude, obedience, or something else?

DIGGING DEEPER

The Pool of Bethesda

Archaeologists have found a pool near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem with five porticoes, exactly matching John's description. Study this location and consider what it tells you about how precise John's account is.

John 5:1–9 • Nehemiah 3:1 • John 2:6 • John 4:13–14

Question: *The man had been waiting at the pool for decades with no result. Jesus bypassed the water entirely and healed him directly. What does that tell us about how Jesus works compared to what we are often waiting for?*

The Sabbath and Its Purpose

The Sabbath was one of the most carefully guarded laws in first-century Judaism. Study what the Sabbath was originally designed to be, and then trace how Jesus reframes it in His response to the leaders.

Genesis 2:2–3 • Exodus 20:8–11 • Mark 2:27–28 • John 5:9–18

Question: *Jesus said, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working' (5:17). What does this claim reveal about His relationship with the Sabbath and His authority over it?*

Thirty-Eight Years

The number thirty-eight is not random. Look at Deuteronomy 2:14 and study the context of Israel's time in the wilderness. Consider what that number may have meant to a Jewish reader hearing this story.

Deuteronomy 2:14 • John 5:5–9 • Luke 13:11–16 • Isaiah 35:3–6

Question: *The man at the pool had been in his condition so long he had no expectation of change and no one to help him. Where do you see that kind of long, quiet hopelessness in the people around you?*

Equal with God

When Jesus claimed that His Father was working and He was working alongside Him, the leaders immediately understood it as a claim to equality with God. Study how Jesus describes His relationship with the Father in the verses that follow (5:19-23).

John 5:17–23 • Philippians 2:5–8 • Colossians 1:15–19 • John 10:30

Question: *The leaders wanted to kill Jesus because He was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. Jesus did not correct their understanding. What does it mean for us that He genuinely was?*

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 11

The Son Does What the Father Does

John 5:19–47 • August 16, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. What does Jesus say about His ability to act independently from the Father? (5:19)
2. What two divine acts does Jesus claim the Father has given Him authority to perform? (5:21–22)
3. What four witnesses does Jesus list to testify on His behalf? (5:33–40)
4. What does Jesus say about the difference between His works and John's testimony? (5:36)
5. What does Jesus say the Scriptures do, and what error does He identify in how the leaders read them? (5:39)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. Jesus describes Himself as a Son who only does what He sees the Father doing — completely dependent, yet completely authoritative. That combination seems paradoxical. How does a posture of total dependence on God produce greater authority rather than less?
2. Jesus tells His opponents that they search the Scriptures because they think that in them they have eternal life, but those same Scriptures testify of Him, and they are not willing to come to Him. What does it look like to handle Scripture in a way that keeps us from actually encountering Jesus? How do we guard against that?
3. Jesus says, "How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?" (5:44). He is diagnosing a social dynamic that blocks faith. What role does the desire for human approval play in preventing people from believing, and what does it take to break free of it?

DIGGING DEEPER

The Son and the Father

Jesus says He can only do what He sees the Father doing. Study the picture this creates: a son learning his trade by watching his father. Notice how this image shapes everything Jesus claims about His authority in this passage.

John 5:19–23 • John 14:9–11 • Colossians 1:15 • Hebrews 1:3

Question: *Jesus says He can do nothing on His own, but only what He sees the Father doing. How does that picture of attentive imitation shape the way you think about living in relationship with God?*

Resurrection and Judgment

Jesus speaks of two kinds of resurrection in this passage. Read verses 24-29 carefully and note the difference between what is happening now and what is coming. Study Daniel 7:13-14 alongside this passage.

John 5:24–29 • Daniel 7:13–14 • 1 Thessalonians 4:16 • Revelation 20:11–15

Question: *Jesus says that hearing His word and believing is already a passing from death to life (5:24). What does it mean that eternal life is a present reality for the believer, not only a future hope?*

Four Witnesses

Jewish legal practice required two or more witnesses for a valid testimony. Read through the four witnesses Jesus presents (5:31-40) and consider why He arranges them in the order He does.

Deuteronomy 19:15 • John 1:6–8 • John 5:31–47 • Luke 24:27

Question: *Jesus says Moses wrote about Him (5:46), and their failure to believe Moses is why they don't believe Him. What does it look like to read the Old Testament in a way that leads toward Jesus?*

You Search the Scriptures

Jesus says the Scriptures testify about Him, but the leaders search them without coming to Him. Read Luke 24:25-27 and 44-45 alongside this passage and study how Jesus reads His own Scriptures.

John 5:39–40 • Luke 24:25–27, 44–45 • 2 Timothy 3:16–17 • Hebrews 4:12

Question: *What is the difference between studying Scripture to accumulate knowledge and abiding in it with willingness to be changed by what you find? What does the second kind of reading require?*

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 12

More Than Bread

John 6:1–21 • August 23, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. What feast was near when Jesus fed the crowd? (6:4)
2. Whom did Jesus test with the question about buying bread, and what was that disciple's response? (6:5–7)
3. What did the crowd try to do after Jesus fed them? (6:15)
4. What were the disciples doing when Jesus came to them on the water? (6:18–19)
5. What words did Jesus speak to the disciples on the water and what happened? (6:20–21)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. Jesus tested Philip by asking where they would buy bread to feed the crowd, even though He already knew what He was going to do (6:6). Why does Jesus sometimes ask us questions He already knows the answer to? What is the purpose of a test when the outcome is already certain?
2. After the miraculous feeding, the crowd wanted to make Jesus king by force. He withdrew to the mountain alone (6:15). The crowd wanted a political deliverer who could feed armies and overthrow Rome. Jesus refused that kind of kingship entirely. What kind of king was Jesus, and how does that challenge our own expectations of what God should do for us?
3. The disciples were struggling against a violent storm, and then Jesus appeared walking on the water. When He got into the boat, they were immediately at their destination. What does it mean that Jesus comes to us in the middle of fear and exhaustion, not after it has passed?

DIGGING DEEPER

The Fourth Sign: Feeding the Five Thousand

John tells us a Passover was near when Jesus fed the crowd. Read Exodus 16 and notice the echoes: the wilderness setting, the hungry crowd, the unexpected provision, the abundance. Study how John is connecting Jesus to that story.

John 6:1–15 • Exodus 16:4–35 • Numbers 11:21–23 • 2 Kings 4:42–44

Question: *John carefully notes that a Passover was near (6:4) before telling the feeding story. How does the Passover context change the meaning of what Jesus did? What is He demonstrating about Himself?*

The Fifth Sign: Walking on Water

When Jesus walked toward the disciples on the water, He said "It is I" — literally ego eimi in Greek. Look at how that phrase is used in Exodus 3:14 and throughout John's gospel. Study what Jesus was communicating.

John 6:16–21 • Job 9:8 • Psalm 77:19–20 • Matthew 14:22–33

Question: *Jesus comes to the disciples in the storm and says ego eimi — 'I AM.' What does His arrival on the water reveal about who He is? How does that identity change the way you read storms in your own life?*

Barley Bread and the Poor

The five loaves in this story were barley bread — the bread of the poor. Study how God has consistently worked through small and insufficient offerings throughout Scripture, beginning with what you can observe here.

John 6:9–13 • Judges 7:13 • Ruth 2:14–17 • 2 Kings 4:42–44

Question: *What did the boy's act of giving his lunch to Jesus cost him? What is the connection between giving what little we have and experiencing what God can multiply?*

Seeking the Wrong King

After the feeding, the crowd wanted to make Jesus king by force. Read John 18:36 and study how Jesus describes His own kingdom. Consider what the crowd was asking for and why Jesus refused it.

John 6:14–15 • John 18:36 • Luke 4:5–8 • Acts 1:6–8

Question: *The crowd wanted a bread king. What would it look like to seek Jesus for who He actually is rather than for what you have decided He should provide? What does that require you to surrender?*

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 13

I Am the Bread of Life

John 6:22–71 • August 30, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. What does Jesus say the crowd is really seeking when they find Him across the lake? (6:26)
2. What is the first "I AM" saying in John's Gospel, and what promise does Jesus attach to it? (6:35)
3. What does Jesus say is the will of the Father who sent Him? (6:39–40)
4. What specific teaching do many disciples call a hard saying, and what do they do in response? (6:60, 66)
5. What does Peter say when Jesus asks the Twelve if they also want to leave? (6:68–69)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. Jesus tells the crowd, "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life" (6:27). We spend enormous energy pursuing things that will not last. What does it actually look like in daily life to labor for what endures? What would have to change?
2. Jesus says His flesh is real food and His blood is real drink (6:55). Many disciples heard this as a hard, offensive teaching and walked away. Jesus did not chase them down or soften the words. What does His refusal to water down the message tell us about the nature of the gospel? Are there truths about Jesus that still feel like too much to accept?
3. Peter's confession — "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" — comes right after a mass departure. He is not saying he fully understands. He is saying that even in confusion, there is nowhere else to go. Have you ever been in a moment of theological difficulty where your faith rested on that kind of simple loyalty rather than full comprehension?

DIGGING DEEPER

Manna and the Bread of Life

The crowd quotes Psalm 78:24 about manna when challenging Jesus. Read Exodus 16 and Psalm 78:17-25 and study the manna story. Notice what the people said, what God provided, and what they still lacked.

John 6:31–35 • Exodus 16:4, 15 • Psalm 78:24–25 • Deuteronomy 8:3

Question: *How does Jesus' contrast between manna that perished and the Bread that gives eternal life reframe what we think we need from God? What is the hunger He is actually offering to satisfy?*

Eating and Drinking

Jesus says that unless you eat His flesh and drink His blood, you have no life in you. This language is deliberately striking. Study how the New Testament connects His body and blood to His death, beginning with 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

John 6:51–58 • 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 • Hebrews 9:14 • Leviticus 17:11

Question: *What is Jesus saying when He calls Himself the Bread of Life and invites people to eat His flesh and drink His blood? What kind of total dependence on His sacrifice is He describing?*

The Hard Saying

Many disciples walked away from Jesus at this point, unable to accept what He said. Study the parable of the soils in Matthew 13:18-23 alongside this passage. Consider what the departure of the crowd reveals about the nature of genuine faith.

John 6:60–66 • John 2:23–25 • Matthew 13:20–22 • 1 John 2:19

Question: *Many people followed Jesus until He said something too difficult. Is there something Jesus has said that you have been reluctant to fully accept? What makes it feel like a hard saying?*

Given by the Father

Jesus says no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him. Study this theme of divine initiative throughout John 6 (verses 37, 39, 44, 65). Then read Romans 8:28-30 and consider what these passages say about why anyone believes at all.

John 6:37–40, 44, 65 • John 10:27–29 • Romans 8:28–30 • Ephesians 1:4–5

Question: *Jesus says no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him. What does it mean for your assurance as a believer that your standing before God rests on His initiative and keeping?*

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 14

Who Is This Man?

John 7:1–24 • September 6, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. Why was Jesus staying in Galilee rather than going to Judea at this point? (7:1)
2. What did Jesus' brothers urge Him to do, and what does John tell us about their faith? (7:3–5)
3. What did Jesus say about the source of His teaching? (7:16)
4. How can a person test whether a teaching is from God, according to Jesus? (7:17)
5. Why was the crowd divided in its opinion of Jesus throughout this chapter? (7:12, 40–43)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. Jesus' own brothers did not believe in Him (7:5). They knew Him from childhood, had lived in the same house, and yet they did not see who He was. What does it tell us about familiarity and faith that proximity to Jesus is no guarantee of belief in Him?
2. Jesus says His teaching is not His own but comes from the Father who sent Him, and then gives a remarkable test: anyone who is willing to do God's will can discover whether the teaching is from God (7:17). What is the relationship between obedience and understanding? Can you think of a time when doing something God called you to do led to a clarity you did not have before you obeyed?
3. The crowd throughout John 7 is sharply divided: some say Jesus is a good man, others say He leads people astray. The same person produces two completely opposite verdicts. What is it about Jesus that makes a neutral response so difficult? Why does He generate such sharp division wherever He goes?

DIGGING DEEPER

The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three great pilgrimage festivals of Israel, celebrating God's provision in the wilderness. Read Leviticus 23:33-43 and Deuteronomy 16:13-15 to understand what the feast commemorated and what it anticipated.

Leviticus 23:33-43 • Deuteronomy 16:13-15 • Nehemiah 8:13-18 • John 7:2, 10

Question: *The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated the wilderness and looked forward to God's final provision. How does knowing that context deepen what Jesus was claiming when He taught in the temple during it?*

Teaching Without Credentials

The crowd marveled that Jesus taught without formal rabbinic training. Read Matthew 7:28-29 and Acts 4:13 alongside this passage. Study what gave Jesus His authority and how it differs from credentials granted by human institutions.

John 7:14-18 • Matthew 7:28-29 • Acts 4:13 • 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

Question: *Jesus said His authority came directly from God rather than from any human institution. How does the church today discern whether a teaching is genuinely from God? What role does obedience play?*

Judging by Appearances

Jesus calls the crowd to judge with righteous judgment rather than by appearance. Read Deuteronomy 1:16-17 and Proverbs 31:9. Study what righteous judgment requires — and what prevents it.

John 7:21-24 • Leviticus 12:3 • John 5:8-9 • Matthew 12:9-14

Question: *Jesus challenges the crowd to judge with righteous judgment rather than by appearances. What internal adjustments are required before someone can actually see a situation clearly?*

His Brothers Did Not Believe

John tells us that the brothers of Jesus did not believe in Him during His ministry. Read 1 Corinthians 15:7, Acts 1:14, and the opening verses of James and Jude. Study what changed and what that transformation tells you about the resurrection.

John 7:3-5 • Mark 3:21, 31-35 • Acts 1:14 • 1 Corinthians 15:7 • James 1:1

Question: *James and Jude were skeptical during Jesus' ministry but became church pillars after the resurrection. What does that transformation tell us about what the resurrection actually did to those who witnessed it?*

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 15

Rivers of Living Water

John 7:25–8:10 • September 13, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. Why do some in the crowd think Jesus cannot be the Messiah, and what does Jesus say in response? (7:27–29)
2. What does Jesus promise to anyone who is thirsty on the last day of the feast? (7:37–38)
3. What does John tell us the rivers of living water refer to, and why was it not yet given? (7:39)
4. What were the officers sent to arrest Jesus unable to do? What reason did they give? (7:45–46)
5. What did Jesus write on the ground before speaking to the woman's accusers, and what happened when He spoke? (8:6–9)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. On the last great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out an open invitation to anyone who was thirsty — while people were actively trying to arrest Him. What does it tell us about Jesus that He issued a call to life in the very moment His enemies were closing in?
2. The officers sent to arrest Jesus came back empty-handed with only one explanation: "No one ever spoke like this Man" (7:46). His words stopped them before He could. Have you ever encountered the words of Jesus in a way that stopped you or you could not simply move past?
3. The woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus as a trap, not out of concern for justice. Jesus scattered her accusers and told her to go and sin no more. What does His response reveal about what Jesus does with shame and failure when someone stands before Him?

DIGGING DEEPER

The Water Ceremony at Tabernacles

Each day of the Feast of Tabernacles, priests carried water from the Pool of Siloam to the temple altar — a ceremony pointing back to the water from the rock in the wilderness and forward to the rivers of Ezekiel 47. Read Exodus 17:1-7 and Ezekiel 47:1-9 alongside John 7:37-39.

John 7:37–39 • Exodus 17:1–7 • Ezekiel 47:1–9 • Zechariah 14:8

Question: *Jesus claimed to fulfill the water ceremony of Tabernacles — to be the source it had always pointed toward. What does it mean that He stands at the center of Israel's feasts as their fulfillment?*

The Promise of the Spirit

John explains that the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus was not yet glorified. Read John 14:16-17, John 20:22, and Acts 2:32-33. Study how the giving of the Spirit is tied directly to what happened on the cross and at the resurrection.

John 7:39 • John 14:16–17 • John 20:22 • Acts 2:1–4, 33 • Joel 2:28–29

Question: *John explains that the Spirit could not yet be given because Jesus was not yet glorified. What does the connection between the cross and the Spirit tell you about the cost of what God poured out at Pentecost?*

Where Jesus Comes From

The crowd assumed the Messiah's origins would be unknown, so a Messiah from Galilee was disqualified. Read Micah 5:2 and Matthew 2:1-6. Study the irony: they thought they knew where Jesus was from, but they did not understand where He actually came from.

John 7:25–29 • John 8:14, 23 • Micah 5:2 • Matthew 2:1–6

Question: *The crowd thought they knew where Jesus came from and used that to dismiss Him. In what ways do we sometimes reduce Jesus to what we already think we know about Him and miss the deeper reality?*

The Woman and the Accusers

The account of the woman caught in adultery raises the question of how Jesus handles a trap designed to force an impossible choice. Study Deuteronomy 22:22 for the law being invoked, and then read Romans 8:1. Consider what Jesus demonstrated that the law alone could not provide.

John 7:53–8:11 • Leviticus 20:10 • Deuteronomy 22:22 • Romans 8:1

Question: *Jesus told the woman, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.' What is the difference between the condemnation He refused to give and the call to change He did give?*

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 16

I Am the Light of the World

John 8:11–30 • September 20, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. What is Jesus' second "I AM" saying, and what promise does He attach to it? (8:12)
2. On what basis do the Pharisees reject Jesus' testimony about Himself? (8:13)
3. How does Jesus answer the charge that His self-testimony is invalid? (8:14, 17–18)
4. What does Jesus say about where He is going that His opponents cannot follow? (8:21–22)
5. What does Jesus say will prove to them that "I am He"? (8:28)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. Jesus declared "I am the light of the world" in the temple courts during the Feast of Tabernacles, when the light ceremony had just illuminated all of Jerusalem. He was standing in the glow of those flames and saying: that is what I am for the world. What does it mean that Jesus is light — not merely a guide, but the source of light itself?
2. The Pharisees tell Jesus His self-testimony is not valid. Jesus replies that His testimony is true because He knows where He came from and where He is going, while they judge only by the flesh (8:14–16). What does it mean to judge according to the flesh, and what would it look like to evaluate Jesus — or any claim — by a different standard?
3. Jesus says, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He" (8:28). The lifting up is the cross. He is saying the crucifixion will be the moment of revelation. How does the cross reveal who Jesus is? Why is the death of Jesus a declaration rather than a defeat?

DIGGING DEEPER

The Light Ceremony at Tabernacles

Jesus declared "I am the light of the world" during the Feast of Tabernacles, when four enormous menorahs illuminated all of Jerusalem. Read Exodus 13:21-22 and Isaiah 60:1-3. Study the imagery God had already established before Jesus used it of Himself.

John 8:12 • Exodus 13:21-22 • Isaiah 60:1-3 • Zechariah 14:6-7

Question: *The light ceremony filled all Jerusalem with light. Jesus stood in that glow and said 'I am the light of the world.' What does the setting tell us about the nature of the claim He was making?*

Light and Darkness in John

John introduced light and darkness in the prologue (1:4-5) and returns to them throughout the gospel. Read John 3:19-21 and 1 John 1:5-7. Study how John uses these two realities and what it means to walk in each one.

John 1:4-5 • John 3:19-21 • John 8:12 • 1 John 1:5-7 • Isaiah 9:2

Question: *Jesus says those who follow Him will not walk in darkness but have the light of life. What does it mean in practice to follow the light? What does walking in darkness look like when it happens gradually?*

The Witness of Two

The Pharisees rejected Jesus' testimony about Himself on legal grounds, citing the requirement of two witnesses from Deuteronomy 19:15. Read John 5:31-37 alongside this passage and study the witnesses Jesus presents. Notice what He claims the Father has done.

Deuteronomy 19:15 • John 5:31-37 • John 8:14-18 • Matthew 3:17

Question: *Jesus appealed to the Father as His corroborating witness. The Pharisees couldn't perceive that testimony because they did not know the Father. What does it take to develop perception that recognizes where God is bearing witness?*

Lifted Up

Jesus says "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He" (8:28). Read John 3:14-15 and John 12:32-33. Study how John uses the phrase "lifted up" and what it means that the cross is described as an act of exaltation.

John 3:14-15 • John 8:28 • John 12:32-33 • Philippians 2:8-9

Question: *Jesus says that when He is lifted up on the cross, people will know that He is the I AM. How does the cross reveal who Jesus is rather than contradict it? What does it mean that His death is a declaration?*

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 17

The Truth That Sets You Free

John 8:31–59 • September 27, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. What condition does Jesus give for being His disciple, and what does He promise will follow? (8:31–32)
2. How do Jesus' opponents describe their own status when He offers them freedom, and what does He say they are actually slaves to? (8:33–34)
3. What does Jesus say characterizes the devil's nature and activity? (8:44)
4. What does Jesus say about Abraham's response to the prospect of seeing His day? (8:56)
5. What does Jesus claim about Himself in relation to Abraham, and what happens immediately? (8:58–59)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. Jesus says the truth will set you free, but first says that abiding in His word is the condition for knowing the truth (8:31-32). Freedom follows from continuing in His teaching. What is the relationship between staying in the word of Jesus and the kind of freedom He is describing?
2. Jesus tells His opponents their father is the devil — a murderer and a liar from the beginning (8:44). This is the strongest language He uses in the entire Gospel. What is it about rejecting truth that aligns a person with the character of the devil? What are the stakes of that diagnosis?
3. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM" — not "I was." He is claiming to be the eternal present tense. The crowd immediately picked up stones. Why is this claim so explosive that it required an immediate violent response? What do you make of it?

DIGGING DEEPER

Slavery to Sin

Jesus says whoever commits sin is a slave to sin (8:34). Read Romans 6:16-22 and Galatians 5:1. Study what slavery to sin actually looks like from the inside, and what the freedom Jesus offers is — and is not.

John 8:31–36 • Romans 6:16–22 • Galatians 5:1 • 2 Peter 2:19

Question: *Jesus says the truth will set you free, but first says you must abide in His word (8:31-32). What is the relationship between staying in the word of Jesus and the kind of freedom He is describing?*

Children of Abraham

The debate over being children of Abraham runs through this entire passage. Read Romans 4:11-12 and Galatians 3:6-9. Study how Paul later unpacks what it actually means to be Abraham's offspring, and compare that to what Jesus is saying here.

John 8:37–47 • Romans 4:11–12 • Galatians 3:6–9 • Matthew 3:9

Question: *Jesus says their father is the devil because they pursue falsehood and murder. What is it about rejecting truth that aligns a person with the devil's character? What does that diagnosis say about the stakes?*

Before Abraham Was

Jesus said "Before Abraham was, I AM" — using the Greek ego eimi in a way His listeners immediately understood as a claim to be God. Read Exodus 3:14 and Isaiah 43:10-13. Study the divine name and why this phrase alone was enough to make them reach for stones.

John 8:58–59 • Exodus 3:14 • Isaiah 43:10–13 • Colossians 1:17

Question: *Jesus said, 'Before Abraham was, I AM' — not 'I was.' He is claiming to be the eternal present tense. What does the present tense mean in that statement, and what does it mean for how you relate to Jesus now?*

Abiding in the Word

Jesus says that abiding in His word is the condition for being His disciple and knowing the truth (8:31-32). Read John 15:7 and Psalm 119:45. Study what it means to abide — to remain, to dwell — in what Jesus says, rather than merely hearing it once.

John 8:31–32 • John 15:7 • Matthew 13:20–23 • Psalm 119:45

Question: *What is the difference between knowing the words of Jesus and abiding in them? What does it look like to live inside His teaching rather than simply be acquainted with it?*

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 18

Once I Was Blind

John 9:1–41 • October 4, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. What assumption did the disciples make about the cause of the man's blindness, and how did Jesus respond? (9:2–3)
2. What did Jesus do to heal the blind man, and where did He send him? (9:6–7)
3. How many times was the man born blind questioned by the Pharisees? (9:13–34)
4. What does the man say when the Pharisees call Jesus a sinner? (9:25)
5. What does Jesus reveal to the man after he is cast out, and what does the man do? (9:35–38)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. The disciples saw a blind man and immediately asked a theological question about why he was born that way. Jesus shifted the frame entirely: this happened so the works of God could be displayed. What does it do to the way you see suffering and disability when you stop asking whose fault it is and start asking what God might be doing?
2. The man born blind was interrogated repeatedly, pressed to change his testimony, and finally thrown out of the synagogue for refusing to deny what had happened to him. Under enormous social and religious pressure he simply said, "One thing I know: I was blind, now I see." What is it about direct personal testimony that no theological argument can actually refute?
3. At the end of the chapter, Jesus says He came so that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind (9:39). The Pharisees were confident they could see clearly. The blind man saw nothing until Jesus touched him and now sees everything. What kind of certainty makes a person blind, and what kind of admission opens the eyes?

DIGGING DEEPER

Sin and Suffering

The disciples assumed sin caused the man's blindness. Jesus refused that framework. Read Luke 13:1-5 and study how Jesus handles the question of suffering and divine judgment. Notice what He affirms and what He denies.

John 9:1–3 • Luke 13:1–5 • Job 1:1; 2:3 • Deuteronomy 28:27–29

Question: *When you encounter someone's suffering, what is your instinctive first question? What would it change in how you respond if you led with the question Jesus implies: what is God going to do here?*

Mud and the Pool of Siloam

Jesus made mud from the ground and anointed the man's eyes, then sent him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. Read Genesis 2:7 and 2 Kings 5:10-14. Study what these stories have in common and what the act of going and washing required from each person.

John 9:6–7 • Genesis 2:7 • 2 Kings 5:10–14 • Isaiah 35:5

Question: *Why do you think Jesus used an unusual method — mud, anointing eyes, sending to a specific pool — rather than simply speaking a word? What does the process require from the man?*

Excommunication and the Synagogue

The man was thrown out of the synagogue for defending Jesus. Read John 16:2 and Hebrews 13:12-14. Study what it cost people to follow Jesus in the first century, and what Jesus did in response when He found the man who had been cast out.

John 9:22, 34–35 • John 12:42 • John 16:2 • Hebrews 13:12–14

Question: *The man was thrown out of the synagogue for refusing to deny Jesus. He lost his religious community. Then Jesus found him. What does it mean that Jesus specifically sought out the one cast out on His account?*

Growing Sight

The man's understanding of Jesus grew with every conversation: a man, a prophet, a man from God, Lord. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Study how the pattern of growing sight and growing conviction played out in the blind man, and what drove each step forward.

John 9:11, 17, 33, 38 • John 1:12–13 • 2 Corinthians 3:18 • Ephesians 1:17–19

Question: *The blind man's understanding of Jesus grew through each confrontation, not despite them. Has opposition or difficulty ever clarified your faith or deepened your understanding of Jesus? What happened?*

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 19

The Good Shepherd

John 10:1–21 • October 11, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. How does the true shepherd enter the sheepfold, compared to the thief and the robber? (10:1–2)
2. What does Jesus say His sheep know about His voice, and what do they do? (10:3–4)
3. What does Jesus call Himself in 10:7 and 10:11, and what does each title claim?
4. What does the good shepherd do that the hired hand will not do? (10:11–13)
5. What does Jesus say is the reason the Father loves Him? (10:17)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. Jesus says His sheep hear His voice and follow Him. In a world full of competing voices — all claiming to offer something — what does it actually mean to recognize the voice of Jesus? How have you learned to distinguish it? What makes some other voices sound similar?
2. Jesus contrasts the good shepherd with the hired hand who flees when the wolf comes, because he has no personal stake in the sheep (10:12–13). The difference is ownership and love, not competence. What does it mean for your experience of Jesus that He stays not out of obligation but because the sheep are genuinely His?
3. Jesus says, "I lay down my life for the sheep" — and then adds, "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (10:17–18). The cross was not something that happened to Jesus; it was something He chose. What does the voluntary nature of His death mean for how you understand it?

DIGGING DEEPER

God as Shepherd in the Old Testament

When Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd, He was stepping into a specific Old Testament promise. Read Ezekiel 34:1-16 carefully — God's indictment of Israel's false shepherds and His promise to come and shepherd His people Himself. Study how precisely John 10 answers that oracle.

John 10:11–16 • Psalm 23 • Ezekiel 34:11–16, 23–24 • Isaiah 40:11

Question: *Ezekiel 34 condemns Israel's false shepherds and promises God Himself will come to shepherd His people. How does that background shape what Jesus is claiming when He calls Himself the Good Shepherd?*

The Door of the Sheep

Jesus says He is the door of the sheep, and that anyone who enters through Him will be saved (10:9). Read Psalm 118:20 and Matthew 7:13-14. Study the image of a door or gate as the single point of entry, and what it means that Jesus identifies Himself as that point.

John 10:7–9 • Psalm 118:20 • Matthew 7:13–14 • Acts 4:12

Question: *Jesus claims to be the only door of the sheep — the singular entrance to life. How do you hold together the exclusivity of that claim with the openness of the invitation 'if anyone enters by Me'?*

Laying Down the Life

Jesus says He lays down His life voluntarily — no one takes it from Him (10:18). Read Isaiah 53:7-10 carefully. Study how the Servant of Isaiah both suffers at the hands of others and gives Himself willingly. Notice how both things are true at once.

John 10:15–18 • Isaiah 53:7–10 • Hebrews 9:14 • Romans 5:8

Question: *Jesus says He lays His life down of His own accord and has authority to take it up again (10:18). What does the voluntary nature of the cross mean for the way you receive what He did?*

Other Sheep

Jesus says He has other sheep not of this fold whom He must bring. Read Isaiah 56:8 and Ephesians 2:11-16. Study how the gathering of Gentiles into the people of God was anticipated in the Old Testament and fulfilled in Christ.

John 10:16 • Isaiah 56:8 • Ephesians 2:11–16 • Acts 10:34–36

Question: *Jesus says He has other sheep not of this fold who will hear His voice. The flock is bigger than one nation or tradition. What does that tell you about the scope of God's mission and who He is gathering?*

Series—Signs, Claims, and Controversy

LESSON 20

I and the Father Are One

John 10:22–42 • October 18, 2026

QUESTIONS FROM THE TEXT

1. What feast is taking place, and what does Jesus do when asked plainly if He is the Christ? (10:22–25)
2. What does Jesus say His sheep have that no one can take from them? (10:27–29)
3. What claim does Jesus make in 10:30, and what does the crowd immediately do in response? (10:31)
4. How does Jesus argue from the Scriptures when accused of blasphemy? (10:34–36)
5. Where does Jesus go after escaping, and what happens there? (10:40–42)

THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS

1. The crowd says to Jesus, "If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus says He has told them, but they do not believe because they are not His sheep. They had already made up their minds. What does it mean that belief is not primarily an intellectual conclusion but a condition of the heart? Is there a version of "Tell us plainly" that is actually a refusal to believe no matter what is said?
2. Jesus says, "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (10:29). The security He describes is not held by the believer's grip but by the Father's. How does grounding your security in the Father's hand rather than in your own faithfulness change the way you live?
3. Jesus ends this section by withdrawing across the Jordan to where John had first baptized, and many believed there. The ministry circle closes at the place where it began. What does it say about how God works that the greatest response in this passage came not in the temple during a confrontation, but quietly, in the place of first testimony?

DIGGING DEEPER

The Feast of Dedication

The Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) celebrated the rededication of the Jerusalem temple in 164 BC after it had been desecrated. Read Daniel 11:31-32 for the background. Consider what it means that Jesus appeared at this particular feast and identified Himself as the one the temple pointed toward.

John 10:22–23 • 1 Maccabees 4:36–61 • Daniel 11:31–32 • John 2:19–21

Question: *Jesus appeared at the feast commemorating the temple's rededication and claimed to be what the temple pointed toward. What does it mean that every Jewish institution — every feast, every ceremony — was pointing toward Him?*

I and the Father Are One

Jesus says "I and the Father are one" (10:30), and the crowd immediately understood it as a claim to be God. Read Deuteronomy 6:4 and Colossians 2:9. Study how the oneness Jesus claims here compares to Israel's foundational confession about God.

John 10:28–30 • John 17:21–22 • Deuteronomy 6:4 • Colossians 2:9

Question: *Jesus said 'I and the Father are one' and the crowd reached for stones. They understood what He meant. What do you do with the fact that the claim Jesus made was exactly what His opponents heard?*

No One Can Snatch Them

Jesus says no one can snatch His sheep from His hand, and no one can snatch them from the Father's hand (10:28-29). Read Romans 8:35-39 and Jude 24-25. Study the language of security in these passages and what it rests on.

John 10:27–29 • Romans 8:35–39 • Jude 24–25 • 1 Peter 1:3–5

Question: *Jesus says no one can snatch His sheep from His hand or the Father's hand. What is the difference between that assurance and the idea that a believer can never fall away? How do those two truths sit together?*

Consecrated by the Father

Jesus argues from Psalm 82:6 that if Scripture calls human judges 'gods,' it cannot be blasphemy for the one the Father consecrated and sent to call Himself the Son of God. Read Psalm 82 in full. Study what God is saying to those judges, and how Jesus turns the argument.

John 10:34–38 • Psalm 82:6 • John 17:17–19 • Hebrews 2:11

Question: *Jesus argues the Father consecrated Him and sent Him into the world. What does it mean that His mission was set apart and sent by the Father rather than self-initiated? How does that shape your understanding of why He came?*

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Series Overview

Series 1 — Who Is This?

A PERIOD OF INTRODUCTION — John establishes who Jesus is before a single controversy begins. Word, Lamb, Messiah, Rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel. These titles and concepts surface in four lessons.

Series 2 — Crossing Every Border

A PERIOD OF DISRUPTION — Jesus moves through Jewish sacred spaces and shatters every expectation. The Temple, a Pharisee's roof, and an ancient Samaritan well. No boundaries exist when Jesus arrives.

Series 3 — Signs, Claims, and Controversy

A PERIOD OF CONFLICT — the I AM claims ignite opposition at every feast, and people begin to divide. Signs multiply. Arguments sharpen. By chapter 10, they are reaching for stones.

Series 4 — The Hour Has Come

A PERIOD OF DECISION — Lazarus walks out of a tomb, and the world must choose a side. The raising that should have ended all doubt becomes the trigger for the cross. Crazy responses happen.

Series 5 — The Upper Room

A PERIOD OF PREPARATION — Jesus spends his final hours forming the disciples for everything ahead. Feet washed. A new command given. The Spirit promised. A prayer offered for all who will believe.

Series 6 — It Is Finished

A PERIOD OF COMPLETION — the arrest, trials, crucifixion, and resurrection fulfill the gospel promise. One word from the cross. An empty tomb. A locked room. A pierced hand extended in invitation.

Series 7 — Do You Love Me?

A PERIOD OF RESTORATION — one conversation on a lakeshore closes every open wound the gospel left. Three questions answer three denials. A broken disciple is sent back into the mission.

