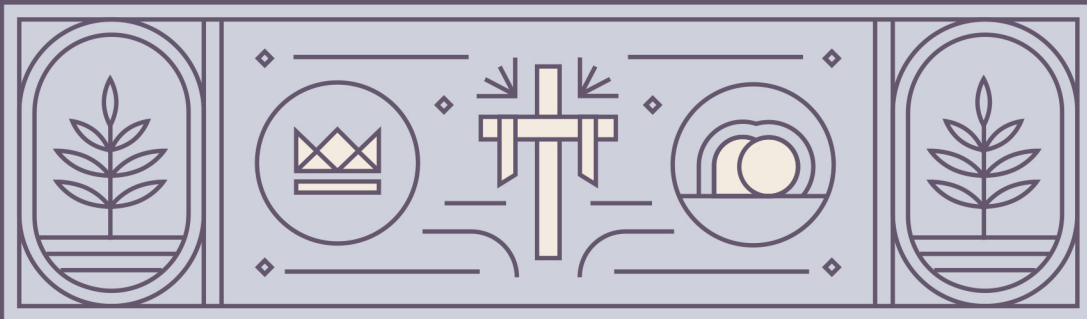


THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

John



GENERAL INTRODUCTION

An Overview of John's Gospel

LESSON STUDY GUIDES || *UNIQUE FEATURES*

Introduction

A Study in the Fourth Gospel

BACKGROUND AND FEATURES

Author	The Apostle John, son of Zebedee — identified in the gospel as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). He is never named directly in the text.
Date	Most likely written between A.D. 85–95, making it the latest of the four gospels. Some place it earlier, in the A.D. 60s–70s.
Audience	Written for a broad audience — Jewish and Gentile believers alike — though John assumes some familiarity with Jewish customs (explained in 2:6; 4:9; 19:40).
Purpose	Stated explicitly: “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (20:30–31).
Theme	Jesus is the Son of God — the eternal Word made flesh — who gives eternal life to all who believe in Him.
Key Verse	“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16, NKJV)

WHAT MAKES JOHN UNIQUE

John shares a family resemblance with the other gospels but stands apart in significant ways. Understanding what is unique to John helps the reader notice what he is doing and why.

- 90% of John’s material is found only in John — unique accounts not paralleled elsewhere.
- No birth narrative. John begins before creation — with the eternal Word (1:1–3).
- No parables. Jesus teaches through long discourses and extended dialogues, not short stories.
- No baptism or temptation of Jesus narrated. These events are assumed but not recounted.
- No transfiguration. The glory of Jesus is revealed through His signs and through the cross.
- No institution of the Lord’s Supper. John records the foot washing in its place.

THE BIG IDEA

#1 Jesus Is Greater Than We Imagine

- He is Creator and Sustainer of the Universe (1:1–5, 9–14)
- He is Greater than the Universe (21:24–25)

#2 Jesus Is Closer Than We Think

- Jesus became like us to bring life (1:12, 16–18; 3:16–17; 5:28–29)
- Jesus welcomes all to join Him in resurrected living (11:25–26; 20:30–31)

#3 Jesus Loves More Than We Know

- The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep (10:15–17)
- Jesus calls us to follow His example of sacrificial love (13:31–35; 14:1–6)

PASSAGES AND DISCUSSIONS FOUND ONLY IN JOHN

The Prologue (1:1–18)

The theological introduction presenting Jesus as the eternal Word (Logos) who became flesh. Nothing like it exists in the other gospels.

The Wedding at Cana (2:1–11)

Jesus' first sign, turning water into wine. Unique to John.

Nicodemus (3:1–21)

The nighttime conversation with a Pharisee about being born again.

The Samaritan Woman at the Well (4:1–42)

The extended dialogue with a woman in Samaria, leading to a village coming to faith.

The Healing at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1–15)

The paralyzed man who had waited 38 years.

The Bread of Life Discourse (6:22–71)

Jesus' extended teaching following the feeding of the 5,000, culminating in many disciples walking away.

The Woman Caught in Adultery (7:53–8:11)

Often noted separately as a textually disputed passage, but found only here.

The "I AM" Statement Before Abraham (8:58)

"Before Abraham was, I AM" — an explosive claim with no Synoptic parallel.

The Healing of the Man Born Blind (9:1–41)

Including the extended aftermath and interrogation by the Pharisees.

The Good Shepherd Discourse (10:1–21)

Jesus as the door and the good shepherd who lays down His life.

The Raising of Lazarus (11:1–44)

The seventh and climactic sign. Entirely absent from Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The Foot Washing (13:1–17)

Jesus washing the disciples' feet at the Last Supper, where the Synoptics record the institution of the Lord's Supper instead.

The Farewell Discourse (14:1–16:33)

Five chapters of Jesus' final words to His disciples, including the promise of the Holy Spirit as Comforter. No parallel anywhere in Scripture.

The High Priestly Prayer (17:1–26)

Jesus' extended prayer the night of His arrest. Unique to John.

The Appearance to Mary Magdalene (20:11–18)

The first resurrection appearance, John's account being the most detailed.

The Appearance to Thomas (20:24–29)

Thomas's doubt and confession, "My Lord and my God."

The Epilogue and Restoration of Peter (21:1–25)

The seaside breakfast appearance and Jesus' threefold restoration of Peter.

THE SEVEN SIGNS

John's gospel is structured in part around seven miraculous signs that reveal Jesus' identity and call for belief. John never uses the word "miracle"; he uses "sign" (sēmeion), because each miracle points beyond itself to something larger about who Jesus is.

#	Sign	Text	Significance
1	Water into Wine	2:1–11	Jesus has power to transform and to provide — the new creation has begun.
2	Healing the Official's Son	4:46–54	Jesus heals across distance — His word alone is sufficient.
3	Healing the Paralytic	5:1–15	Jesus has authority over illness and, by implication, over the Sabbath.
4	Feeding the 5,000	6:1–14	Jesus is the bread of life — He provides what the body and soul need.
5	Walking on Water	6:16–21	Jesus is Lord over creation — the great I AM present in the storm.
6	Healing the Blind Man	9:1–41	Jesus is the light of the world — He gives sight both physical and spiritual.
7	Raising Lazarus	11:1–44	Jesus is the resurrection and the life — death itself is subject to Him.

THE SEVEN I AM SAYINGS

Seven times in John, Jesus makes a bold declarative statement using the phrase "I AM" followed by a metaphor. The phrase echoes God's self-disclosure to Moses (Exodus 3:14) and would have been immediately recognized by Jewish listeners as a claim to divine identity.

#	I AM Statement	Text	Significance
1	<i>"I am the bread of life"</i>	6:35	Jesus satisfies the deepest hunger of the human soul.
2	<i>"I am the light of the world"</i>	8:12	Jesus is the source of truth, revelation, and salvation.
3	<i>"I am the door of the sheep"</i>	10:7	Jesus is the only way into safety and life.
4	<i>"I am the good shepherd"</i>	10:11	Jesus knows His own, lays down His life, and brings them together.
5	<i>"I am the resurrection and the life"</i>	11:25	Jesus is not merely the giver of life — He is its source.
6	<i>"I am the way, the truth, and the life"</i>	14:6	Jesus is the exclusive path to the Father.
7	<i>"I am the true vine"</i>	15:1	Fruitfulness and life flow only from remaining connected to Jesus.

KEY THEMES

Belief / Faith

The word "believe" (pisteuo) appears nearly 100 times — more than the other three gospels.

Life

Eternal life is not only a future hope but a present reality for the believer (see also, living).

Light and Darkness

Light represents truth and salvation; darkness represents rejection and spiritual blindness.

Glory

The glory of God is revealed through Jesus — not in the way Israel expected, but through the cross (12:23; 13:31).

Witness / Testimony

John repeatedly emphasizes testimony — from John the Baptist, from the works of Jesus, from the Father, from Scripture, and ultimately from the Spirit and the disciples.

The Hour

Throughout chapters 2–12, Jesus' hour has not yet come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). From chapter 13 forward, the hour has arrived (12:23, 27).

KEY WORDS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Word (*λόγος, logos*)

The divine reason and speech through which God acts and reveals Himself. John identifies Jesus as God's complete and personal self-expression, present before creation.

1:1, 14

Believe (*πιστεύω, pisteuō*)

To trust and commit oneself to a person, not merely to accept facts. The central human response John calls for throughout the gospel, appearing nearly 100 times.

3:16; 6:29; 11:25; 20:31

Life (*ζωή, zōē*)

Divine, eternal life originating in God Himself, not merely biological existence. Jesus does not only promise it; He embodies it.

1:4; 5:26; 10:10; 14:6

Light (*φως, phōs*)

Illumination that exposes, reveals, and gives life. Represents truth and salvation throughout the gospel, set in constant contrast to darkness.

1:4; 3:19; 8:12; 12:46

Darkness (*σκοτία, skotia*)

The realm of spiritual blindness, rejection, and unbelief. Darkness does not overcome the light but consistently refuses to comprehend it.

1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35

Glory (*δόξα, doxa*)

The visible weight and radiance of God's presence. In John, glory is revealed not through conquest but through the cross.

1:14; 11:4; 12:23; 17:5

Truth (*ἀλήθεια, alētheia*)

Ultimate reality as God defines it. Jesus does not merely speak the truth; He is the truth, and the Spirit guides believers into it.

1:14; 8:32; 14:6; 17:17

Love (*ἀγαπάω, agapaō*)

The self-giving, initiating love of God extended to the world and modeled by Jesus. The standard for how disciples are to love one another.

3:16; 13:34; 15:9; 17:26

World (*κόσμος, kosmos*)

The created order, but more often humanity in its organized rejection of God. God loves the world and sends His Son into it; the world largely refuses Him.

1:10; 3:16; 15:18; 17:14

Sign (*σημείον, sēmeion*)

A miracle that points beyond itself to reveal who Jesus is. John selects seven signs, each disclosing a new dimension of Christ's identity.

2:11; 6:14; 11:47; 20:30

Witness / Testimony (*μαρτυρία, marturia*)

Legal testimony offered to establish truth. The gospel is structured around a chain of witnesses: John the Baptist, the works of Jesus, the Father, Scripture, and the Spirit.

1:7; 5:31; 8:17; 19:35

Abide / Remain (*μένω, menō*)

To stay, dwell, or continue in a relationship. The defining word of discipleship in John, reaching its fullest expression in the vine and branches of chapter 15.

1:39; 8:31; 15:4; 15:7

Send / Sent (*ἀποστέλλω, apostellō*)

To commission/dispatch with full authority. Jesus is sent by the Father; believers are sent by Jesus
3:17; 5:36; 17:18; 20:21

Father (*πατήρ, patēr*)

God as the one who sends the Son, loves the world, and draws people to Himself. Jesus' relationship with God the Father is central in John.
1:14; 5:19; 14:9; 17:1

Spirit (*πνεῦμα, pneuma*)

The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son to convict, guide, and indwell believers after Jesus' departure. Called the Spirit of truth and the Helper.
3:5; 7:39; 14:17; 16:13

Flesh (*σὰρξ, sarx*)

"The Word became flesh" insists on a genuine, complete humanity, not an appearance.
1:14; 3:6; 6:51; 17:2

Peace (*εἰρήνη, eirēnē*)

A wholeness and settled security that Jesus gives and the world cannot provide or take away. Given to the disciples in the shadow of the cross.
14:27; 16:33; 20:19; 20:21

Son (*υἱός, huios*)

Jesus as the unique Son of God, sharing the Father's nature and sent into the world to give life.
1:18; 3:16; 5:19; 17:1

Know (*γινώσκω, ginōskō*)

Intimate, relational knowledge, not merely intellectual awareness. Jesus knows his own; eternal life itself is knowing the Father and the Son.
10:14; 13:35; 14:7; 17:3

Eternal Life (*ζωή αἰώνιος, zōē aiōnios*)

Life of the age to come, available now through belief in Jesus. Not simply unending existence but a present, relational reality with God.
3:16; 5:24; 10:28; 17:3

Receive (*λαμβάνω, lambanō*)

To accept and welcome, particularly Jesus Himself or the Spirit He gives. The opposite response to the rejection described in the prologue.
1:12; 3:27; 14:17; 20:22

Judgment (*κρίσις, krisis*)

The decisive separation that occurs in response to Jesus. Judgment is not only future; it happens in the present moment of belief or rejection.
3:19; 5:24; 8:16; 12:31

Glorify (*δοξάζω, doxazō*)

To honor, magnify, and make the character of God visible. In John, Jesus is glorified through the cross, and the Father is glorified through the Son.
7:39; 12:16; 13:31; 17:4

Shepherd (*ποιμήν, poimēn*)

The one who knows, leads, protects, and lays down his life for the sheep. Jesus claims this title against the backdrop of Israel's failed leaders in Ezekiel 34.
10:2; 10:11; 10:14; 10:16

Paraclete / Helper (*παράκλητος, paraklētos*)

One called alongside to help, advocate, and defend. Jesus uses this title for the Holy Spirit, promised to the disciples after His departure.
14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7

Bread (*ἄρτος, artos*)

Physical sustenance, but in John a vehicle for Jesus' claim to be the true bread from heaven that satisfies the deepest human hunger.
6:32; 6:35; 6:48; 6:51

Water (*ὔδωρ, hudōr*)

A recurring symbol of spiritual life and cleansing. Jesus offers living water that permanently satisfies, and connects it to the gift of the Spirit.
4:10; 7:38; 19:34

Name (*ὄνομα, onoma*)

The full character and authority of a person. To believe in Jesus' name, pray in his name, and be kept in his name are central themes of the gospel.
1:12; 14:13; 17:6; 20:31

Sheep (*πρόβατον, probaton*)

Those who belong to Jesus, hear His voice, and follow Him. The sheep metaphor defines the relationship between Jesus and His own in terms of intimate knowledge and total security.
10:3; 10:11; 10:14; 10:27

THE WHOLE-GOSPEL CHIASM

A chiasm (from the Greek letter chi, χ) is a literary device in which a sequence of ideas is presented, reaches a climactic point, and then repeats in reverse order — A–B–C..D..C'–B'–A'. The Raising of Lazarus (John 11:38–44) is at the absolute center of John's message about Jesus. Everything before it moves toward death and resurrection; everything after unfolds the implications of that power.

A — 1:1–18 — The Word revealed in glory

B — 1:19–4:54 — Jesus crosses every boundary

C — 5:1–10:42 — The world debates who Jesus is

D — 11:1–37 — Death is real; faith is tested

★ — 11:38–44 — **CENTER: Lazarus, come out**

D' — 11:45–12:50 — Death is coming; faith still tested

C' — 13:1–17:26 — Jesus tells His own who He is

B' — 18:1–20:29 — Jesus crosses the final boundary

A' — 20:30–21:25 — The Word revealed in mission

SERIES OUTLINE

A Period of Introduction — 1:1–2:12

John establishes who Jesus is before a single controversy begins. The eternal Word becomes flesh, the Lamb is identified, the first disciples are called, and glory is quietly revealed at a wedding in Cana.

A Period of Disruption — 2:13–4:54

Jesus moves through Jewish sacred spaces and shatters every expectation. The temple is challenged, a Pharisee is confounded, a Samaritan woman is found, and a dying boy is healed from a distance.

A Period of Conflict — 5:1–10:42

The I AM claims ignite opposition at every feast and the world begins to divide. A paralytic walks, thousands are fed, the blind receive sight, and by chapter ten they are reaching for stones.

A Period of Decision — 11:1–12:50

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.

A Period of Preparation — 13:1–17:26

Jesus spends His final hours forming the disciples for everything ahead. Feet are washed, a new command is given, the Spirit is promised, and a prayer is offered for all who will ever believe.

A Period of Completion — 18:1–20:31

The arrest, trials, crucifixion, and resurrection fulfill everything the gospel promised. One word from the cross. An empty tomb. A locked room. A pierced hand extended in invitation.

A Period of Restoration — 21:1–25

One conversation on a lakeshore closes every open wound the gospel left. Three questions answer three denials and a broken disciple is sent back into the mission.

OUTLINE OF JOHN

Adapted from The Bible Project Overview bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-john/

I. Introduction: The Word Made Flesh 1:1–51

- A. The Prologue: The Word, the light and life (1:1–18)
- B. John the Baptist's testimony (1:19–34)
- C. The first disciples and the titles of Jesus (1:35–51)

II. Miraculous Signs and Controversies 2:1–10:42

- A. Four Jewish institutions replaced: wedding, temple, rabbi, sacred well (2–4)
- B. Four Jewish feasts fulfilled: Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, Hanukkah (5–10)

III. Raising Lazarus: The Climactic Sign 11:1–12:50

- A. The resurrection of Lazarus — a symbol of Jesus' life-giving purpose (11:1–44)
- B. The response: belief and opposition grow (11:45–12:50)

IV. Jesus' Final Words to His Disciples 13:1–17:26

- A. The foot washing and the new commandment (13)
- B. The Farewell Discourse: the Spirit and abiding (14–16)
- C. The High Priestly Prayer (17)

V. Jesus' Death and Resurrection 18:1–20:31

- A. Arrest and trials — Jesus as the upside-down king (18–19)
- B. The crucifixion: Jesus lays down His life (19)
- C. The resurrection appearances (20)

VI. Epilogue: The Continued Mission 21:1–25

- A. Restoration of Peter and the call to follow (21:1–19)
- B. The disciple Jesus loved and the witness (21:20–25)

THE MOVEMENT OF JESUS IN JOHN

Adapted from The Life Application Bible Commentary (John)

John's story begins with John the Baptist ministering near Bethany beyond the Jordan (1:28ff). Jesus begins His ministry and calls some of His future disciples. His public ministry opens in Galilee at a wedding in Cana (2:1ff), followed by a move to Capernaum, which becomes His base of operations (2:12). He then travels to Jerusalem for the feasts (2:13), where He meets Nicodemus, a religious leader (3:1ff). After leaving Judea, He passes through Samaria and ministers to the Samaritans (4:1ff). From there, Jesus continues His work in Galilee and Judea, performing signs and miracles (4:46ff; 5:1ff). The narrative follows Him as He feeds the 5,000 near Bethsaida-Julias by the Sea of Galilee (6:1ff), walks on the water to His disciples (6:16ff), and continues teaching throughout Galilee (7:1). He later returns to Jerusalem (7:2ff), ministers beyond the Jordan in Perea (10:40), and raises Lazarus in Bethany (11:1ff). The final section moves to Jerusalem for the Passover. There Jesus enters His final hours, teaching His disciples (13:1ff), praying and suffering in Gethsemane (18:1ff), and undergoing trials in Jerusalem (18:12ff). He is crucified, but ultimately rises from the dead as He promised (20:1ff.).

SERIES TEXTUAL OUTLINE

Who Is This?

- 1 — John 1:1–18
- 2 — John 1:19–34
- 3 — John 1:35–51
- 4 — John 2:1–12

Crossing Every Border

- 5 — John 2:13–25
- 6 — John 3:1–21
- 7 — John 3:22–36
- 8 — John 4:1–26
- 9 — John 4:27–54
- 10 — John 5:1–18

Signs, Claims, and Controversies

- 11 — John 5:19–47
- 12 — John 6:1–21
- 13 — John 6:22–71
- 14 — John 7:1–24
- 15 — John 7:25–8:10
- 16 — John 8:11–30
- 17 — John 8:31–59
- 18 — John 9:1–41
- 19 — John 10:1–21
- 20 — John 10:22–42

The Hour Has Come

- 21 — John 11:1–16
- 22 — John 11:17–44
- 23 — John 11:45–12:11
- 24 — John 12:12–36
- 25 — John 12:37–50

The Upper Room

- 26 — John 13:1–18
- 27 — John 13:19–38
- 28 — John 14:1–14
- 29 — John 14:15–31
- 30 — John 15:1–17
- 31 — John 15:18–16:15
- 32 — John 16:16–33
- 33 — John 17:1–26

It Is Finished

- 34 — John 18:1–11
- 35 — John 18:12–40
- 36 — John 19:1–22
- 37 — John 19:23–42
- 38 — John 20:1–18
- 39 — John 20:19–31

Do You Love Me?

- 40 — John 21:1–25

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.

