

Exploring the Gospel of John:

The challenge is to read through the Gospel of John.

John's Gospel has a distinctive style that sets it apart from the other three gospel records in the New Testament. John is less interested in recording the daily events in Jesus life and ministry than are the other gospel writers. Instead, he digs deeper and focuses in more detail on some of the crucial themes that Jesus addressed in his preaching and teaching. You won't find the parables in John's Gospel but there are some significant events recorded in John that are not in any of the other Gospels (some of these passages have been marked with an * to draw your attention to them). John is also very observant of the response that Jesus received from the Jewish religious community of his day. When he refers to "the Jews" he is usually referring to the ruling Jewish religious leaders than to the ordinary folk in Israel.

John also records in his Gospel a series of seven "I am" declarations made by Jesus. These are "the bread of life" (6:35), "the light of the world" (8:12 & 9:15), "the gate for the sheep" (10:7,9), "the good shepherd" (10:11,14), "the resurrection and the life" (11:25), "the way, the truth and the life" (14:6), and "the vine" (15:1,5). They are worth special consideration when you encounter them in your reading as they represent Jesus' claims about himself.

For this exercise the Gospel of John is divided into a series of readings with a place for you to record your progress. Each passage is followed by a topical heading and a very brief note or comment on the passage. It is anticipated that you would use these as daily readings but you must choose a pattern that fits your world. The objective is not simply that you read the complete Gospel of John but that you take the time to reflect on the contents of each passage. It is suggested that you keep some blank paper at hand on which you may note your personal observations and any questions that you may wish to have answered.

Check off each selection as you have read and digested it.

_____ Reading: *John 1:1-18 The Word becomes flesh.
John opens his gospel with a clear testimony concerning the divinity of Jesus and of John's acceptance of him as the Lord's Messiah. This understanding sets the scene for all that follows.

_____ Reading: John 1:19-34 The role of John the Baptist.
John the Baptist, having denied that he himself was the expected prophet, identifies Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

_____ Reading: John 1:35-51. Jesus' acquires his first disciples.
Jesus begins to gather disciples who know him to be the Lamb of God - Simon Peter and Andrew and Philip and Nathanael.

_____ *John 2:1-11 Jesus changes water into wine.
At a wedding in Cana of Galilee, in response to his mother Mary's appeal, Jesus turns water into wine. This was declared to be the first of Jesus' miraculous signs that confirmed his power.

_____ John 2:12-25 Jesus clears the Temple.
Jesus goes to Jerusalem for Passover and disperses those doing business in the temple courts. Matthew (21:12,13), Mark (11:13-17) and Luke (19:45,46) describe similar events that occurred just before Christ's arrest and crucifixion. Some believe that all these descriptions are of the same event, but the details in John are distinctive.

_____ *John 3:1-21 Jesus teaches Nicodemus.
This passage contains one of the most well known of all Jesus' declarations (Jn. 3:16). However, that verse ought to be understood in its context in the conversation that Jesus was having with Nicodemus.

_____ John 3:22-36 John the Baptist's Testimony about Jesus.
John the Baptist continues his ministry and continues to offer his testimony to Jesus as the Christ (ie. The promised Messiah).

_____ *John 4:1-26 Jesus talks with a Samaritan Woman.
Jesus does not avoid travelling through Samaria, as most Jews of his day did, and has a conversation with a Samaritan woman.

_____ *John 4:27-42 The Disciples rejoin Jesus. Many Samaritans believe.
Jesus receives a positive response from a number of Samaritans. This reflects Jesus' openness to those outside the mainstream of Judaism.

_____ *John 4:43-54 Jesus heals the official's son.
The people of Galilee grow in their awareness of Jesus and he heals the son of a royal official. This again represents sharing the benefits of his power outside Judaism.

_____ *John 5:1-15 The Healing at the Pool.
John records Jesus making another visit to Jerusalem during which he heals an invalid and some were concerned about a violation of the Sabbath laws.

_____ John 5:16-30 Life through the Son.
The Jews in Jerusalem persecute Jesus and plot to kill him. Jesus talks about his relationship to his Heavenly Father and begins to talk about resurrection life.

_____ John 5:31-47 Testimonies about Jesus.
Jesus refers to the testimony of John the Baptist and the testimony of his miracles. He also challenges his accusers to recognize that the Scriptures testify to him also.

_____ John 6:1-15 Jesus feeds the five thousand
Jesus performs another miracle to demonstrate his divine power and feeds a hungry multitude. The miracle influences people to believe in Jesus' claims about himself.

_____ John 6:16-59 Jesus walks on water. Jesus the Bread of Life.
Jesus again demonstrates his power on the Sea of Galilee and the crowds follow him. Jesus tells the crowd that he is more than a provider of physical food but that he is the bread of life.

_____ John 6:60-71 Many disciples desert Jesus
Jesus' plain teaching about himself offends many and he challenges the inner core of his disciples to commit themselves to the truth he has taught them.

_____ John 7:1-24 Jesus Goes to the Feast of Tabernacles and teaches at the Feast.
John records another less conspicuous visit that Jesus makes to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus' contentious conversation with the Jews seems to be a reference to Jesus' earlier healing in Jerusalem recorded in John 5.1-15.

_____ John 7:25-53 Is Jesus the Christ? The unbelief of the Jewish Leaders.
Despite the unbelief and opposition of the Jewish leaders many people continue to believe Jesus' teaching. There is debate about whether or not Jesus is the Christ (ie. The Messiah).

_____ **John 8:1-11 The Woman Caught in Adultery.**
As most Bibles indicate this passage is not found in the earliest surviving texts of John's Gospel. However, it does ring true to Jesus' way of dealing with people.

_____ John 8:12-30 The validity of Jesus' testimony.
Jesus claims to be "the light of the world" and claims divine authority for his teaching and that his claim does not require the endorsement of the human religious authorities.

_____ John 8:31-47 The Children of Abraham
Jesus rebukes the religious authorities for their spiritual arrogance and then declares that they are being influenced by the devil rather than by God.

_____ John 8:48-59 Jesus makes claims about himself.
The Jewish leaders accuse Jesus of being demon-possessed. Jesus reaffirms his unique relationship to God. His opponents want to kill him but he slips away.

_____ *John 9:1-41 Jesus heals a man born blind and then talks about spiritual blindness.
Jesus heals a blind man. Jesus rejects the idea that the blindness resulted from sin. The healed man defends his healer. Jesus reveals himself to the man and speaks about spiritual blindness.

_____ John 10:1-21 The Shepherd and his flock.
Using imagery that reminds us of Psalm 23, Jesus claims a unique role in relationship to his disciples. He acknowledges that the shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep.

_____ John 10:22-42 The unbelief of the Jews.

John documents the increasing opposition of the Jews towards Jesus. As a result Jesus leaves Jerusalem and goes to the area by the Jordan where John the Baptist began baptizing.

_____ *John 11:1-44 Death of Lazarus. Jesus comforts the sisters and raises Lazarus.

The account of the raising of Lazarus is unique to John's Gospel. It was in this context that Jesus made a powerful declaration concerning his being "the resurrection and the life" (vs.25). These events strengthened the support for Jesus prior to the crucifixion.

_____ John 11:45-57 The plot to kill Jesus.

The raising of Lazarus also prompted the Jewish authorities, including the high priest, to move forward with their plans to execute Jesus.

_____ John 12:1-19 Jesus anointed at Bethany. The Triumphal Entry.

A feast at Bethany reveals many things; the growing belief in Jesus, the character of Judas Iscariot, and the intensity of the Jewish reaction to Jesus. The "Triumphal Entry" of Jesus into Jerusalem for Passover takes place the next day.

_____ John 12:20-36 Jesus predicts his death.

Some Greek speaking Jews come seeking Jesus. Jesus predicts his death and some begin to struggle with the question of how the Messiah could possibly die. Jesus returns to the theme of light.

_____ John 12:37-50 The Jews continue their unbelief.

John emphasizes that Jesus explains that the continued unbelief of the Jews is a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. John notes that there are some hidden believers amongst the Jews.

_____ *John 13:1-17 Jesus washes his disciple's feet.

John provides us with our only description of these events which emphasize humility as Jesus prepares the disciples for experiences which are to come.

_____ John 13:18-38 Jesus predicts his betrayal and also Peter's denial.

Jesus reveals that he understands how his betrayal will come about and Judas realizes that Jesus knows he is the betrayer. Jesus also predicts the Apostle Peter's denial.

_____ *John 14:1-31 John records another "I am" and promises the Holy Spirit.

This is a familiar passage in which Jesus assures the disciples that he is the Messiah. He then goes on to comfort and prepare the disciples for his departure with the promise of the Holy Spirit.

_____ *John 15:1-16:4 Jesus and the vine and the branches.

This is another familiar passage in which Jesus continues to emphasize his unique relationship with his Heavenly Father. He prepares the disciples for the events that are to come and tells them how they should expect the world around them to respond.

_____ John 16:5-33 The work of the Holy Spirit and how grief will be replaced by joy. Jesus continues his teaching about the coming role of the Holy Spirit in their lives. He acknowledges their confusion, confirms that they will experience grief, but assures them that ultimately they will have joy.

_____ *John 17:1-26 Jesus prays for himself, for his disciples, and for all believers. This whole passage is a prayer that Jesus offers to his Father in the hearing of his disciples before his arrest. Jesus dedicates his ministry to the Father, prays for his disciples, and then for all who will come to believe in the future (which includes us).

_____ John 18:1-27 Jesus is arrested and taken to the High Priest. Peter denies Jesus. John provides his eyewitness account of Jesus' arrest and trial by the High Priest (Caiaphas) whose desire to eliminate Jesus had been recorded earlier by John (11:49).

_____ John 18:28-19:16 Jesus appears before Pilate and is sentenced to be crucified. Jesus is taken from Caiaphas to Pilate, the Roman Governor. John's account of Jesus appearance before Pilate emphasizes the lengths to which Pilate went to avoid imposing the death sentence on Jesus. However, his insecurity prevails and he orders the crucifixion.

_____ John 19:17-42 The crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus. John was an eyewitness of the crucifixion. One personal detail in his account relates to Jesus' mother who was also present. John speaks of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," which is a reference to himself. Jesus directs John to assume the care of his mother Mary (vss. 26, 27). The description of Jesus' burial mentions Nicodemus who is known to us from John, chapter 3.

_____ John 20:1-18 The empty tomb and Jesus' appearance to Mary of Magdala. John describes the visits of Mary of Magdala to the tomb on the morning of the resurrection. He also gives his own eyewitness account because he is understood to be "the other disciple" who outruns Peter in arriving.

_____ John 20:19-31 Jesus appears to the disciples and later to Thomas. Jesus appears to the disciples on the evening of the resurrection and then again a week later when Thomas was present.

_____ John 21:1-25 Jesus and the miraculous catch of fish before he reinstates Peter. The final chapter of John's Gospel describes an appearance of the risen Christ to a group of the disciples on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias (an alternate name for the Sea of Galilee). Jesus reinstates Peter who had earlier denied him. John concludes with a claim of authorship for the Gospel and affirms the veracity of his testimony.

Your observations and questions: