

## STUDY

# Gospel of John Bible Study Questions and Answers (Free PDF)

Leader's Edition — with Answers

A 10-session walk through the Gospel of John, from the eternal Word to the empty tomb, with open questions for your own answers. Free to print, no sign-up.

A 10-session study of the Gospel of John for groups or solo reading.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

**John 1:1 (NIV)**

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

**John 1:14 (NIV)**

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

**John 3:16 (NIV)**

# The study guide

## SESSION 1 · JOHN 1:1-51

### The Word Made Flesh

John opens before creation, with the eternal Word who was with God and was God, then watches that Word become flesh and walk among us as John the Baptist points and the first disciples follow.

1. What does John 1 say about who the Word is and what the Word does, from before creation to the moment the Word becomes flesh?

John 1:1-3 says the Word was in the beginning, was with God, and was God, and that all things were made through him. John 1:4-5 calls him the life and the light that the darkness has not overcome. Then John 1:14 says the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, full of grace and truth.

2. Why might John begin his Gospel here, in eternity, rather than with Jesus' birth the way Matthew and Luke do?

John reaches back past Bethlehem to tell us who the child really is: the Creator himself. His opening words echo Genesis 1:1, so we hear that a new creation has begun. Matthew and Luke tell how Jesus came. John tells who he was all along.

3. Where do you most need to believe that the God who made all things has come close enough to dwell among us?

Leader's note: This question asks where God feels far away, or where we doubt he is near. John 1:14 says the Word made his dwelling among us. Give each person a quiet moment to name one place, then pray that Jesus would be found there.

## SESSION 2 · JOHN 2:1-3:36

### The First Signs

Jesus turns water into wine at Cana, clears the temple in Jerusalem, and meets Nicodemus in the dark to speak of being born again and of a love that gave the only Son.

1. What happens at the wedding in Cana, and how does John describe the effect of this first sign on the disciples?

At Cana (John 2:1-11) Jesus turns water in stone jars into wine, and the master of the banquet calls it the best. John names it the first of Jesus' signs, in which he revealed his glory, and he says his disciples put their faith in him (John 2:11).

2. How does Jesus answer Nicodemus when he comes by night, and what does being born again mean in that conversation?

Jesus tells Nicodemus that no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again, born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-8). Most readers hear this as new life from above, given by God's Spirit and not earned by us. Faithful readers differ on what 'water' points to, but all agree the new birth is God's gift, rooted in the love of John 3:16.

3. Nicodemus came with his questions in the dark. Where are you still bringing yours, and what would it look like to bring them to Jesus honestly?

Leader's note: This question is about honest doubt. Nicodemus came at night, yet he later spoke up for Jesus (John 7:50-51) and helped bury him (John 19:39). Invite each person to name one question they have been afraid to say out loud, and remember that God so loved the world (John 3:16), questions and all.

## **SESSION 3 · JOHN 4:1-54**

### **Living Water**

Jesus crosses every social line to meet a Samaritan woman at a well, offers her living water, and is received in a town that should have rejected him, then heals an official's son from a distance.

1. What does Jesus offer the woman at the well, and how does she respond once he names what she has been hiding?

Jesus offers her living water, a spring welling up to eternal life (John 4:10, 14). When he names her five husbands and the man she has now (John 4:16-18), she does not run. She calls him a prophet, then goes back to town and tells everyone about him (John 4:19, 28-29).

2. Why does it matter that Jesus speaks so openly with a Samaritan woman, someone his own culture would have him avoid?

Jews and Samaritans avoided each other (John 4:9), and his disciples were surprised to find him talking with a woman (John 4:27). Jesus shows that no one is too far outside for his welcome. Many Samaritans believed because of her word, and more because they heard him themselves (John 4:39-42).

3. Where in your life do you most thirst for something that keeps running dry, and what would it mean to ask Jesus for living water?

Leader's note: This question asks what we keep drinking from that leaves us empty again. Jesus says whoever drinks the water he gives will never thirst (John 4:14). Invite each person to name one thing they keep going back to, and to ask Jesus for what only he can give.

## **SESSION 4 · JOHN 5:1-6:71**

### **The Bread of Life**

Jesus heals a man who has waited thirty-eight years, claims a oneness with the Father that scandalizes the leaders, feeds five thousand, and calls himself the bread of life as the crowds begin to fall away.

1. What does Jesus claim about his relationship to the Father in John 5, and why does it provoke such opposition?

In John 5:17-23 Jesus says his Father is always at work and so is he. The Son does what the Father does, gives life, and is owed the same honor as the Father (John 5:23). The leaders wanted to kill him because he called God his own Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:18).

2. When Jesus calls himself the bread of life, what is he offering the crowd that bread alone could never give?

Jesus says whoever comes to him will never go hungry (John 6:35). The crowd had eaten bread that filled them for a day (John 6:26-27), but he offers himself, food that lasts to eternal life. They wanted the gift, and he was offering the Giver.

3. Many followed Jesus for the loaves and left when the teaching got hard. What keeps you following him when he is not meeting the need you came with?

Leader's note: This question asks what holds us when Jesus is not giving what we came for. Peter's answer in John 6:68 is a good anchor: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.' Invite each person to say honestly why they stay.

## **SESSION 5 · JOHN 7:1-8:59**

### **Light at the Festival**

At the Feast of Tabernacles the crowds argue over who Jesus is, the leaders try to seize him, and Jesus declares himself the light of the world and claims the divine name, before Abraham was born, I am.

1. What are the different things people say about Jesus during the festival, and how do they fail to agree on who he is?

Some said he was a good man, and others said he led the people astray (John 7:12). Some asked if he was the Messiah (John 7:26), some called him the Prophet (John 7:40), and others said the Christ could not come from Galilee (John 7:41). John sums it up plainly: the people were divided because of Jesus (John 7:43).

2. What does Jesus mean when he says before Abraham was born, I am, and why do his hearers pick up stones?

Jesus takes the name God gave Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). He is saying more than that he is older than Abraham. He is saying he is the eternal God. His hearers understood him, and they picked up stones, the penalty for blasphemy (John 8:58-59).

3. Where do you find yourself uncertain about who Jesus really is, and what would help you sit honestly with that question rather than settle it too quickly?

Leader's note: This question makes room for honest uncertainty. Jesus promises that anyone who chooses to do God's will will know whether his teaching comes from God (John 7:17). Invite each person to name one thing about Jesus they still wrestle with, and to keep bringing it to him rather than settling it too soon.

## **SESSION 6 · JOHN 9:1-41**

## The Man Born Blind

Jesus heals a man born blind, and the long aftermath traces how the man comes to see Jesus clearly while the religious experts, who can see, grow blinder to the truth in front of them.

1. How does the healed man's understanding of Jesus grow over the course of the chapter, from a man called Jesus to Lord?

First he calls Jesus 'the man they call Jesus' (John 9:11). Then he says Jesus is a prophet (John 9:17), and that he must be from God (John 9:33). At the end he says 'Lord, I believe,' and worships him (John 9:38).

2. Why does John set the man's new sight against the leaders' growing blindness, and what is he showing about belief?

A man blind from birth receives sight and then faith, while the Pharisees, who claim to see, stay blind. Jesus says he came so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind (John 9:39-41). Belief here is not a matter of credentials. It is the humility to receive what God gives.

3. Where might you be sure you see clearly while actually missing what God is doing, and what would honest blindness look like instead?

Leader's note: This question asks where we are too sure of ourselves. The healed man kept to what he knew: 'One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!' (John 9:25). Invite each person to ask God to show one place where they have been certain and might be wrong.

### SESSION 7 · JOHN 10:1-42

## The Good Shepherd

Jesus calls himself the gate for the sheep and the good shepherd who lays down his life for them, knowing his own by name, and claims again a unity with the Father that divides his hearers.

1. What does Jesus say the good shepherd does for the sheep, and how is that different from the hired hand?

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11). The hired hand does not own them, so when the wolf comes he runs (John 10:12-13). The sheep know the shepherd's voice and follow him (John 10:3-4).

2. Why does it matter that the shepherd knows his sheep by name and lays down his life willingly, not by force?

Jesus says he calls his sheep by name (John 10:3), and that no one takes his life from him. He lays it down of his own accord (John 10:17-18). The cross is not a defeat that overtakes him. It is his own choice of love, and it is love for each of us, not for a crowd.

3. Where do you need to hear that the shepherd knows your name and will not abandon you when trouble comes?

Leader's note: This question is for anyone who feels alone in trouble. Jesus says his sheep will never perish, and no one can snatch them from his hand (John 10:28). Invite each person to name one fear, and to hear that he knows their name.

**SESSION 8 · JOHN 11:1-12:50****The Raising of Lazarus**

Jesus raises Lazarus from the tomb after four days, declaring himself the resurrection and the life, and the sign that gives the most life also sets in motion the plot that will cost him his own.

1. What does Jesus say to Martha before he raises Lazarus, and how does she respond to the claim that he is the resurrection and the life?

Jesus tells Martha that her brother will rise again (John 11:23). She answers that he will at the last day (John 11:24). Then Jesus says he is the resurrection and the life, and asks, 'Do you believe this?' Martha says yes, and confesses him as the Messiah, the Son of God (John 11:25-27).

2. Why do you think John places Jesus weeping at the tomb right alongside his power to raise the dead?

'Jesus wept' (John 11:35). John puts the tears beside the power because both are true of him. He is God with authority over death, and he is a man who grieves. He weeps even though he knows he is about to raise Lazarus, so our sorrow is never small to him.

3. Where in your life feels four days dead, past hope, and what would it mean to believe Jesus can speak even there?

Leader's note: This question asks about the place that feels past hope. Jesus asked Martha, 'Do you believe this?' (John 11:26). Invite each person to name their four-days-dead place, and to answer him as honestly as Martha did.

**SESSION 9 · JOHN 13:1-17:26****The Upper Room and the Farewell**

On the last night Jesus washes his disciples' feet, gives a new command to love, promises the Spirit, calls himself the way and the true vine, and prays his long prayer for those he is about to leave.

1. What does Jesus do and say in the upper room to prepare his disciples for his leaving, from the foot washing to the promise of the Spirit?

He washes their feet (John 13:4-5), gives a new command to love one another as he has loved them (John 13:34), and tells them not to let their hearts be troubled (John 14:1). He promises the Spirit, another Helper who will be with them forever (John 14:16-17), teaches them to remain in him as the vine (John 15:4-5), and prays for them (John 17).

2. When Jesus says he is the way and the truth and the life, what is he asking his troubled disciples to trust?

The disciples are troubled because he is leaving. Jesus says he is the way, and that no one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6). He is asking them to trust that he is the road to the Father, and that his going is not abandonment, for he is preparing a place for them (John 14:2-3).

3. Jesus tells his friends to love one another as he has loved them. Who is the hardest person for you to love that way right now?

Leader's note: This question presses on the person we would rather not love. Jesus washed the feet of the one who would betray him (John 13:2, 5, 11) and then gave the command to love as he loved (John 13:34). Invite each person to name one name, and to ask what one small act of service might look like.

## **SESSION 10 · JOHN 18:1-21:25**

### **The Cross and the Empty Tomb**

Jesus is arrested, tried, and crucified, declaring it is finished, and then rises, meeting Mary in the garden, Thomas with his doubts, and Peter on the shore with the question, do you love me.

1. How does John tell the story of the trial and crucifixion, and what does Jesus mean when he says it is finished?

John tells it with Jesus in command: he steps forward at his arrest (John 18:4-8), tells Pilate his kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), and even provides for his mother from the cross (John 19:26-27). 'It is finished' (John 19:30) means the work the Father gave him is done. Most readers hear the work of our salvation completed and paid in full.

2. Why does John end with Jesus restoring Peter by a charcoal fire, asking three times, do you love me, after Peter's three denials?

Peter denied Jesus three times by a charcoal fire (John 18:18, 25-27). Jesus meets him by another charcoal fire (John 21:9) and asks three times, giving Peter three chances to say yes (John 21:15-17). Each time Jesus gives him work to do. This is restoration, not shame.

3. Thomas needed to see the scars, and Jesus met him there. Where do you need Jesus to meet your doubt rather than scold it?

Leader's note: This question asks where our doubt needs a gentle answer. Jesus showed Thomas his hands and side, and Thomas answered, 'My Lord and my God!' (John 20:27-28). Invite each person to name one doubt, and to bring it to Jesus as Thomas did, out loud.