

PORTRAITS OF Jesus

THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

STUDY GUIDE

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. - John 20:30-31

#1 INTRO | *Portraits of Jesus*

Everyone, knowingly or not, has painted a portrait of Jesus in their mind. Some of these portraits are clear and robust with knowledge and details that can only come from spending significant time with the subject. Christians can easily have these portraits distorted by *legalistic tradition* crafting an image of God's Son as harsh and unrelatable, *liberal license* showing a wise teacher who cared for the poor and marginalized but never addressed sin or called for repentance and obedience, or *ignorance* making a portrait vague or less than fully accurate. Even those who are opposed or indifferent to Jesus have painted portraits worthy of only mockery or that are too small to have an impact on their lives.

The deeper you get into the Gospel of John, the more you realize just how unique it is, especially compared with the other gospels. Likely written last, John offers a perspective on Jesus that is at times quite different from Matthew, Mark, or Luke. While it is commonly accepted that John's gospel has the most personal and relational perspective on Jesus, it is the absence of certain things that make the gospel of John truly stand out. In John, there are no demons or conflicts with evil spirits. The gospel of John never uses the word "repent" and only uses the phrase "Kingdom of God" during Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. There is hardly any mention of the return of Christ (it shows up in John 5:28 & 21:22), and there are, strictly speaking, no parables. The gospel of John brings a perspective on the life and ministry of Jesus that not only aligns with the other gospels but enhances and enriches them.

Over the next 8 weeks we are going to look at 8 self-contained Portraits of Jesus painted by the Apostle John in words spanning the first half of the book of John. These portraits of Jesus will center on 8 stories where Jesus crosses the boundaries of traditional Judaism, challenges the religious leaders, and introduces the life that can be lived in the new covenant

Jesus encounters four Jewish traditions and transforms their meaning

Jesus at the Wedding 2:1-11

Jesus at the Temple 2:12-24

Jesus with the Rabbi 3:1-21

Jesus at a Sacred Well 4:1-42

Jesus shows himself as the Messiah at four Jewish feasts

Jesus on the Sabbath 5:1-18

Jesus at Passover 6:1-70 esp. vs. 25-59

Jesus and the Feast of Tabernacles 7:1-52 8:12-30

As you would examine a Rembrandt, notice what the light wants to illuminate realizing that the light always outshines the darkness and exposes the truth that God wants us to ingest. Pray that the Holy Spirit would illuminate the scripture differently than before and anticipate different truths to be illuminated.

As we embark on this journey together, keep in mind John's intentions which he makes crystal clear:

"[I have written this] so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" John 20:30-31

Keep this purpose statement in mind as you read through the book. John wants you to

QUESTIONS:

1. View the Bible Project video for John 1-12 as a group (scan the QR Code with your camera) and see the poster on the next page (page 4).
2. Discuss John's purpose of writing this gospel in John 20:30-31. How does this purpose help us interpret the ultimate meaning and application for each of the portraits we will examine?
3. Share with the group what it was (could be multiple events) that helped you come to believe that Jesus truly is the Christ.
4. When you read the Bible what is it that helps you read with fresh eyes and an open mind as you re-read well known stories?
5. What is it that you would like to glean from this series? Being purposeful and intentional helps us focus and invest in the study.
6. As a CommunityGroup, what would be your hope and prayer for this group over the next 9 weeks?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-2e9mMf7E8>



PORTRAIT 1 | Jesus at the Wedding

"Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

- John 2:10-11

"He who made the wine at this wedding does the same thing every year in the vines. As the water which the servants put into the water-pots was turned into wine by the Lord, so that which the clouds pour down is turned into wine by the same Lord."

- St. Augustine

John 2:1-12

I was talking with a Seahawk player in the early 90's who was part of our church. I once asked him who impressed him most at the stadium during the games. Without hesitation he said the "Peanut Guy". He noted that week after week this certain guy threw peanuts better than anyone, always treated people respectfully and did his job with passion and humility. It's amazing the impact that the faithful person that serves outside of the limelight can make on the person who is constantly in the limelight. Jesus knew that sometimes he would be more effective if he quietly served behind the scenes. John 2 starts with one of those encounters.

Early in the book of John, we see Jesus portrayed as the one who is to restore through his first miracle. Restore Israel, restore lives, restore brokenness, restore the shamed... As common water is transformed into amazing wine, so Jesus does the same for those who believe in Him. This is the first of seven "signs" in John that point people directly to Jesus (John 20:30-31) as the way to eternal life and to the "full" or "abundant life" on earth (John 10:10).

Note 3 Areas of Kingdom Significance:

1. The Water Jars for Purification: Mark 7:1-4 shows us the water in the jars was used to wash (purify) hands and feet on the way into the banquet and the hands before and after dinner. Jesus is starting to show that God is doing a new thing in the middle of the old Jewish system. He is bringing the promised purification to Israel and will ultimately bring purification and newness to all who will accept Him. The empty jars of Judaism were filled when Jesus came. All that the law could not fulfill were fulfilled in Jesus.

2. Transformation of Water to Wine: Jesus took the most common drink and turned it into a drink representative of a celebration. Jesus didn't stop at 1 jar but rather turned all 6 into wine, which was certainly more than what was needed for the remainder of the wedding. Jesus didn't do things halfway. Jesus also doesn't want to just partially transform us. Jesus won't stop short in your life. Jesus' grace and forgiveness towards those who have run dry by their own works and attempts at self-salvation doesn't stop there, instead it flows abundantly for life and for all who would call upon the name of the Lord.



PORTRAIT 2 | *Jesus at the Temple*

3. The Wedding Feast - Greater things are still to come. What Jesus accomplished at the wedding in Cana was a foreshadow of the future wedding hour where the church, his bride, is united in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21). Isaiah 25:6-8 is a glimpse of what is yet to come as we all gather at the great banquet of the Lord. A banquet for all people...with the finest of wines. What a banquet that will be! We need to make sure that we aren't so enamored by the engagement that we lose sight of the wedding that is to come.

Jesus chose obscurity over fame as he performed this first miracle in the insignificant village in Galilee. Insignificance never mattered to God and in fact, He seems to thrive on turning the insignificant into something more than we could've asked or imagined. After all, he is the God of miracles. He is the God of abundance.

NT Wright said it well:

"The transformation from water to wine is of course meant by John to signify the effect that Jesus can still have today on people's lives. He came, as he says later, that we might have life in all its fullness (10:10). You might want to pray through this story with your own failures and disappointments in mind—remembering that transformation only came when someone took Mary's words seriously: 'Do whatever he tells you.'"

QUESTIONS:

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? What are some key points you picked up regarding the Bible, Jesus, or the book of John?
2. How did Jesus save the Master of the banquet from shame?
3. Read 2:11. How did Jesus reveal his glory in this simple miracle story?
4. Are you in awe of the glory of God? Does God's glory determine how you act in a situation, respond to people, or even see people.
5. How is Jesus illustrating the promised purification of Israel? How about our purification?
6. How has your life been transformed, and the shame been removed by Jesus?
7. How does this transformation occur? What does it look like?

Refer also to Romans 12:1-2

*His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."
- John 2:17*

"the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil in the world is for good men to do nothing" - Edmund Burke

John 2:13-25

A friend of mine tended to get rather animated especially in meetings. He'd start to rant about what he thought, would get a little red in the face, raise his voice, and get very dramatic and tense with his words. One day, I finally had enough and looked him in the eye and said, Rick, why are you getting so mad? He stared me down intently, looked me right back in the eyes and said as loud and dramatic as ever, "I'm not mad, I'm passionate!" Call it zeal or righteous anger, you can be assured that Jesus was very passionate as he was going about his father's business.

When I was a kid, the flannel graph (*millennials please google it*) was the power point of that day. Let me tell you, this story in John 2:13-25 could 'preach it' on the light blue flannel graph board...The whip was flying, tables were tossed over – it was awesome! The realization is that this is more than a compelling story of violence/vengeance played out on a flannel graph but rather one of Jesus reframing the meaning of the temple and ultimately the whole Jewish system. Jesus now goes from low profile to high profile; from being in the shadows in the small town of Cana to center stage in the limelight of Jerusalem.

Read the following quotes to understand the state of the temple and the Jewish religion as Jesus enter Jerusalem:

NT Wright: "The Temple was the beating heart of Judaism. It wasn't just, as it were, a church on a street corner. It was the center of worship and music, of politics and society, of national celebration and mourning. It was also the place where you would find more animals (alive and dead) than anywhere else. But, towering above all these, it was of course the place where Israel's God, YHWH, had promised to live in the midst of his people. It was the focal point of the nation, and of the national way of life."

Warren Weirsbe: "The condition of the temple was a vivid indication of the spiritual condition of the nation. Their religion was a dull routine, presided over by worldly minded men whose main desire was to exercise authority and get rich. Not only had the wine run out at the wedding feast but the glory had departed from the temple."

There was a lucrative business going on at the temple. Foreign money was exchanged for the proper temple Currency – high rates. In some cases the priests were the ones running these businesses. Animals for sacrifice were sold at a premium. What started as convenience escalated into a for-profit market.

PORTRAIT 3 | *Jesus with the Rabbi*

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. - John 3:5

"The simple reality is this: everyone who is truly a Christian is born again. There are no other kinds of Christians. There is no such thing as a non-born-again Christian or an unregenerate Christian. Yes, there are plenty of unregenerate church members and plenty of unregenerate people who profess to be Christians, but a person cannot be in Christ unless he or she is regenerate." – RC Sproul

John 3:1-21

When our son was born, he took one breath and stopped breathing. Finally, after many resuscitation techniques the oldest nurse grabbed him, turned him over and whacked him on the back a few times until we finally heard that awaited cry. It's a great story, but God did not give him new breath — new life, so that he would walk around talking about what a tough birth he had. He gets on with life and lives looking ahead to what God has in store for him. For Christians, the new birth is only the beginning of what being alive in Christ is all about. Live with expectancy!

Perhaps one of the most important chapters in the New Testament starts with a short debate of carefully chosen words in what will be an ongoing greater debate/conflict between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders that ultimately will send Jesus to the cross.

On one side of the debate you have Nicodemus (Nic), an honorable and respected Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, representing the Jewish Leaders...**the "we" in vs 2**. On the other side of the debate is Jesus, **the "you"**. "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." (John 3:2)

In vs. 3, Jesus does not address Nic's sarcastic flattery, but instead cuts to the chase and prefaces his words carefully with a double emphasis on "truly". In 3:3 says "...no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." Totally changing the course of the conversation, Jesus uses the word "unless" which makes being born again a necessary condition. This condition was a far cry from the thought of a works-based religion.

Jesus clarifies in vs. 5 by explaining with another "truly, truly" that this rebirth is of both the water and the Spirit, a likely reference to Ezekiel 36:24-28. Note the reference to the sprinkling with clean water and giving of His Spirit in Ezekiel 36. This would have connected with Nic's Jewish mind. The Old Testament prophets emphasized that people needed two things: **1**. They had to be purified. **2**. They had to be resurrected by the power of God. Both are inferred by Jesus.

Ephesians 2:1-5 describes this renewal and regeneration/rebirth for Christians. A birth

To complicate things further, Gentiles could only come into this outer court area and would often come to seek truth or wisdom from the priests and instead were met with this circus in the marketplace which made their access to God even harder. Convenience had overtaken reverence and Jesus had enough. Jesus was declaring war on the hypocritical leaders and condemning a system that only complicated access to God. He was zealous for his Father's house.

Jesus' mission is consuming him as it should and is bringing new meaning to what their Passover feast and time of sacrifice was all about. He will eventually himself become the sacrificial lamb, the ultimate sacrifice, as foretold by John the Baptist (John 1:29). However for the time being, Jesus stops the sacrificial system in its tracks on one of the busiest days of the year, all for the passion he has for the dwelling place of his Father.

Jesus is consumed with passion for his mission, for bringing God's glory back to the temple and for reframing himself as the true Temple where God's glory dwells (see 1:14). He predicts the destruction of his own body on the cross and how he will be raised again in the resurrection. His resurrection will fulfill the expectation that the

QUESTIONS:

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? What are some key points you picked up regarding the Bible, Jesus, or the book of John?
2. How did Jesus' actions threaten the rhythm of Judaism?
3. In what ways does truly following Jesus disrupt religion today?
4. Does Christianity today sometimes complicate access to the message of grace through Jesus? Explain and discuss.
5. How can we reframe our beliefs and practices to align more with the heart of Jesus in this area?
6. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being greatest) how would you rate your passion for the mission of Jesus in the world? Explain.

PORTRAIT 4 | *Jesus at the Sacred Well*

So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

- John 4:28-29

"You can drink from all sorts of wells, but unless the source of your water is the Living Water Himself, you will never be satisfied."

- Beth Moore

John 4:1-42

A few years ago, I was involved with the organization that presented relationship curriculum in public school health classes. Sometimes I would spend a whole day speaking to class after class about dating, sexuality, and boundaries to encourage them to make a choice for abstinence. I had a lot of fun engaging the students and they seemed to enjoy the break from their normal class structure. I would always highlight this statement: *"If no one else has told you before, I am telling you now, you are valuable, and you are worth waiting for."* Often times they would write a note of appreciation as well on their feedback forms. I can't count the number of times I received a note from a middle school or high school girl who said to me, "Thank you for teaching us today. I never knew I was valuable enough to be able to decide for myself."

No one had come to the Sychar School District to present this kind of relationship education to the young women of the Class of A.D. 18. They were not allowed in school anyway. One young woman (we'll call her Photini), grew up with the reinforced belief that she was disposable to the men around her. Sure, Photini needed a man to protect her and provide for her in that society (her father might have been out of the picture), but they had not. One after the other, men divorced her and threw her out of their lives and into the arms of the next man. Feeling more and more desperate and disposable, with less and less belief in her worth, she lands with the last man, who won't even marry her.

Photini slinks her way invisibly to Jacob's Well in the midday heat avoiding those whose opinions have withered her soul. She meets another man, a Jewish man. She knows she shouldn't be talking to him. "Doesn't he know he shouldn't be talking to me!"

Jesus says, "Give me a drink," and so it begins (John 4:7). Jesus proceeded to break all the known taboos. He sees Photini in her invisibility and vulnerability when others would have looked away. He shares a drink with a woman who has been serially and unceremoniously dumped and offers her everlasting hope. As thirsty as Jesus was, he had diagnosed a thirst, a desperation, in Photini that could only be satisfied by living water.

that now makes us alive when we were once dead in our sin. The text attributes it all to God... "but God" (vs.4)... not our works or accomplishments, but GOD's grace and power!

Jesus gives further explanation in vs. 6-10 separating the spiritual and the earthly things ending in a rebuke of Nicodemus' thinking in vs. 10-12. Note in vs. 10 & 11 that Jesus gives a play on Nic's words in vs. 3 re-defining who is on each side of the debate. "You" now refers to Nic and the Jewish leaders, while "we" refers to not just Jesus but the Trinity which fully defines Jesus' authority.

It's funny how the religious guys didn't get it and the others did. There are a lot of Nicodemus' who call themselves Christians. They challenge Jesus to do and say what they think Jesus should be doing rather than committing themselves to being "all in" and living a Jesus-led life exhibited by the evidence of regeneration. "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spirit gives birth to Spirit."

You know, ole Nic shows up again later in the gospel story at the cross. He and Joseph of Arimathea give Jesus a proper burial. Funny thing how the cross of Christ changes the hearts of men...not from the earth but from above. Even the flattering debaters can end up at the cross, honoring Jesus. I can't even imagine what it was like for Nic when he realized that those burial clothes and spices would only be needed for three days.

QUESTIONS:

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? What are some key points you picked up regarding the Bible, Jesus, or the book of John?
2. Consider RC Sproul's quote, how is it challenging? If you are a Christian, share what the regeneration process has been for you.
3. Do you see this encounter between Nicodemus and Jesus as contentious, friendly or what? What is Jesus' main point and how does he turn the tables to make his points?
4. Explain how easy or difficult is it to fall into the trap of trying to turn over a new leaf in your own strength rather than recognizing that we need the Holy Spirit to produce new birth in us?
5. Does Ephesians 2:1-5 help you understand this rebirth? Who is responsible for the conversion and grace?
6. How does being born of water and Spirit connect to Ezekiel 36:24-28?

PORTRAIT 5 | *Jesus on the Sabbath*

This “disposable” woman becomes essential to the whole town. Her witness to Jesus draws a crowd and they find in Jesus what she found, the Savior of Sychar, the Savior of the world. What treasures await us when we gain the perspective, the vision of Jesus.

Who are the invisible, disposable people in your everyday life? That cashier has a story. Your barista who has been experiencing loss and pain. Your co-worker who never complains has real needs that haven’t been expressed. The beggar has no meaningful support. The receptionist is keeping the disappointment away with the big smile. “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes! The fields are ripe for harvest!”

This story is about so much more than a Jewish man talking to a Samaritan woman. Jesus’ claims about himself are not just long awaited for but they are welcomed hope in the midst of pain. Jesus chooses to break the cultural, racial and spiritual barriers that have kept people separated for generations.

Jesus tells his disciples to stay alert and get real Gospel vision (John 4:35). Our impulse is different than Jesus’ Gospel impulse when we encounter the “disposable” and the “invisible.” Our impulse is to look away and go on with our day. Jesus steps into the

QUESTIONS:

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? What are some key points you picked up regarding the Bible, Jesus, or the book of John?
2. What are some of the racial, spiritual or cultural barriers that need to be broken down in your life? What about in the larger Church?
3. Ask the Spirit to reveal to you the “invisible” person(s) whom you have been overlooking. Who are they?
4. Who in your everyday life needs to hear about their value in Jesus’ eyes? How can you take action to communicate that to them?
5. What practical steps can we take as a group to stay alert to what Jesus is doing around us?

“But Jesus replied, My Father never stops working, so why should I?”

- John 5:17

“As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

- John 9:4-5

“Man was created on the sixth day right before God rested, so man was created as it were to enjoy the weekend with God.”

– Michael Wilcock

John 5:1-17; John 9

In John 5, the Jewish religious leaders are fired up because Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath. A similar story happens in John 9 when Jesus heals a blind man on the Sabbath. In the mind of the religious leaders, these are clear violations of the Law and deserving of severe punishment. Jesus’ response, as always, is insightful, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” (John 5:17) Jesus gives a lengthier but similar response in John 9:4-5.

The Life Application Bible says, *“The Jewish leaders saw both a mighty miracle of healing and a broken rule. They threw the miracle aside as they focused their attention on the broken rule because the rule was more important to them than the miracle.”* (Wow! How often do we see that same thing in the religious world today?) *“God is prepared to work in our lives, but we can shut out his miracles by limiting our views about how he works.”*

The point Jesus seems to be making is this: the Sabbath is about experiencing life as it was meant to be, and ever since humanity fell into sin, God has been working to restore what has been lost and broken. Jesus is working on the Sabbath, but paradoxically, his work is about restoring the true meaning of the Sabbath (unhindered enjoyment of relationship with God), and it is grounded in that very reality (his relationship and identity as the Son of God, see 5:19-20).

In Isaiah 58, there seems to be a similar connection between the active work of renewal and the idea of truly making the Sabbath a delight. We can see this by comparing verses 6-7 with verses 13-14.

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?” -Isaiah 58:6-7

PORTRAIT 6 | *Jesus at Passover*

*For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”
- John 6:33*

“If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” - Isaiah 58:13-14

There is no doubt Jesus embodies Isaiah 58 as he rests in complete dependence upon the Father while also going about his Father’s work of bringing rest to a restless world. As we follow Christ, we should know that a life of promoting the gospel of true rest and ultimate healing will be a life of action as long as we live in a fallen world. **However, as long as we remember our identity that is found in his finished work, our Kingdom action will be carried out from a posture of rest.** Jesus wants to teach that when the opportunity to do good presents itself, it should not be ignored, even on the Sabbath.

Both the Father and the Son are working to restore Sabbath delight and wholeness to the world. Through the Spirit we can join them in that work and one day see things brought back to how they were supposed to be; all of life lived in constant enjoyment of a weekend with God.

QUESTIONS:

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? What are some key points you picked up regarding the Bible, Jesus, or the book of John?
2. What are some specific areas in which you are not experiencing the rest that is available in the finished work of Jesus? Really think about this! Ask the Spirit to reveal areas where self-dependence and unbelief are hindering you from experiencing the rest that Jesus purchased for you.
3. Through his Spirit in you, how does Jesus specifically want to bring rest found in the new creation to others?
4. As a community, be specific in prayer when asking the Spirit to reveal areas in which you can be more intentional about taking action to bring new creation rest to those around you.
5. What does Jesus have to say about spiritual blindness in John 9:35-41? Have you experienced spiritual blindness? How does spiritual blindness impact who we engage with who don’t see Jesus for who He is?
6. Have you found yourself ignoring the opportunities to do good when in fact, Jesus would have taken advantage of the opportunity? Explain.

John 6:1-58

Nothing in John’s gospel is by accident. John painstakingly makes every word count and wants his readers to take note of the context of each encounter Jesus had. Along with the clearing of the temple (Jn 2:13-22) and the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Jn 19-21), the events of John 6 take place during Passover (Jn 6:4). This chapter is about so much more than the feeding of the masses, Jesus walking on water and has a discourse about bread. It’s all about the Exodus, the very thing that the Passover commemorates. Jesus is choosing yet another Jewish Feast, the Passover, to show himself as the Messiah, the true bread from heaven as he ushers in the *new Exodus*.

Although there are multiple connections to the Exodus, such as Jesus walking on water, which is likened to the Israelites passing through the Red Sea. The aspect of the Passover Jesus is emphasizing is when God fed the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings with the ‘bread from heaven’. Bread is a theme woven throughout the book of John and weaves its way into the Christian practice of communion today as implemented by Jesus in John 13.

The Events of John 6 can be broken into 3 parts with ties to the New Exodus and hence a new way to look at Passover:

6:1-15 - The Passover miracle of bread for the crowds

The feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-21) echoes Moses’ provision of “bread from heaven” in the wilderness (Exod 16:4, 14, 31 // Ps 78:24).

6:16-25 - Jesus and the disciples cross the lake. Jesus walks on water.

NT Wright makes this explanation. “John has already made it clear that this chapter is to be all about the Exodus, and so when we have this scene of Jesus walking on the water we should be prepared to understand it as part of the same story. The children of Israel began their journey to freedom by coming through the Red Sea, with the waters parting before them but closing again on their pursuers. It was, of course, Moses who led the way through the Red Sea, and the crowds have just declared that Jesus is ‘the prophet who should come into the world’—the prophet, that is, like Moses (verse 14; see Deuteronomy 18:15).”

6:26-58 - Jesus’ conversations with the crowds

The crowds “grumble” about Jesus’s claim to be the bread of heaven (6:41, 43), and even his disciples “grumble” (6:61); this recalls Israel’s grumbling over water and bread in the wilderness (Exod 17:3; Num 11:1; 14:26-29). As the manna came down from heaven to feed Israel, sustaining them during the Exodus, so Jesus has come from heaven to be the bread that gives life to the world. The new Exodus led not by Moses, but by Jesus, leads to the ultimate promised land, eternal life. (6:40,51,58)

PORTRAIT 7 | *Jesus and the Feast of Tabernacles*

The provision of God provides sustenance and sustainability. Jesus continues to teach, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (6:35). The feeding of the 5,000 was just a small demonstration of the abundance that is sourced in Christ. Nothing in creation was created in a way that it would satisfy the longings of our soul.

This is why Augustine wrote, “Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in Thee.” The cravings of our soul are only temporarily satisfied by food and clothing, but they are eternally satisfied when we come to know Christ as our provider.

QUESTIONS:

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? What are some key points you picked up regarding the Bible, Jesus, or the book of John?
2. Recall what the theme of the Exodus and Passover is in each of the 3 sections of Jn 6. How does this change your view of the miracle of feeding the 5,000 and Jesus walking on water? Ultimately, what is John’s intent in telling these stories?
3. If you are seeking to know more about Jesus or are a believer in Jesus, what do these words of Jesus mean to you personally and how has this truth played out or not played out in your life? “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst” (6:35).
4. In what ways are you tempted to rest on your own resources to find satisfaction and joy in life? Contrast this to the provision God has provided through Christ and explain why Christ’s provision is a far greater resource to depend on?
5. What statements did Jesus make in 6:25-59 that would have been shocking, if not downright heretical to this audience? Explain.

If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. 18 The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.

- John 7:17-18

John 7:1-52; 8:12-30

About six months separate the timeline of the end of John chapter 6 (which takes place during Passover) and the beginning of chapter 7 (which focuses on the Feast of Booths). Colin Kruse explains the purpose of the Feast of Booths or Tabernacle writing when he states, “*The feast had a double purpose: to remember Israel’s time in the wilderness when they lived in booths, and to rejoice before the Lord after harvest (in particular the grape, olive and fruit harvests). It also involved looking forward to a new exodus, the time when the kingdom of God would be brought in with all its attendant blessings*” (John [IVP Academic], p. 181).

As Jesus attends this feast, which was one of the most joyful of the pilgrim feasts for Israel. During this time, he confronts the wayward understanding of Law as He describes Himself as the source of Truth (7:18). There was a ceremony during the Feast of Tabernacles where each day for seven days they would draw water from the pool of Siloam and march it up in a joyful procession up to the Temple. The Israelites then poured it out on the altar as a way of commemorating the water God had provided through the rock in the wilderness (Exodus 17:1-7).

It was on the last and greatest day of the feast that Jesus makes the bold proclamation in Jn 7:37-38, “**Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.**” Many ended up missing out on his offer, due to their pre-determined ideas and assumptions about Jesus. Tragically, people do the same thing today.

Jesus is claiming to be the ultimate water of salvation- the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises that God had made to his people. He is saying that if you want refreshment look to him. God once refreshed people in the wilderness through the rock but today he is refreshing people through Jesus.

The next bold proclamation of Jesus comes in Jn 8:12. One of the ways the people of the time celebrated the Feast of Booths was to build high flaming torches along in the Temple area to commemorate the pillar of fire in which God dwelt amongst his people in the wilderness. It was a vivid reminder of God’s abiding presence. It is the midst of this Jesus claims “**I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.**”

PORTRAIT 8 | *Jesus during Hanukkah*

Interestingly, John references light more than Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined. Remember back in John 1:4 where John said Jesus was “life and that life was the light of all mankind.”

Jesus hijacks (in a good way) the traditional meaning of water and light and associates them with his purpose and identity of being both the living water and light of the world. His claim confronts his audience with a paradigm shift in their beliefs. Either they will accept his testimony or they will reject it.

QUESTIONS:

1. What part of the text or sermon had the greatest impact on you? What are some key points you picked up regarding the Bible, Jesus, or the book of John?
2. What assumptions or preconceived ideas about Jesus hold you back from turning to him? (Do you assume he is boring? Do you assume he will ask too much of you? Do you assume he will not answer you? Do you assume...?)
3. How have you experienced refreshment and the Holy Spirit flowing in your life?
4. When did you come to believe Jesus was the light of the world?
5. According to 1 John 2:9-10 what does being in the light entail? And what would it look like if you lived that out this week?
6. Where else have we encountered the themes of “water” and “light”?
7. God always exposes sin for the purpose of illumination, not isolation. How might you allow the revealing of sin in your life to create a greater intimacy with your church? How might you allow the revealing of sin to create a deeper dependence on the completed work of Christ (Consider Romans 8)?

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

-John 10:27-28

John 10:22-42

Hanukkah, translated –“rededication” was the celebration of the renewal of Jewish worship in the temple after its three year defilement by Antiochus Epihanes in 167-164 B.C. He was overthrown by the Maccabean revolt. Antiochus Epihanes claimed to be a deified human. It’s in the aftermath of this claim of the false deity that John chooses to highlight Jesus’ claims during the Hanukkah celebration in 10:30,33,38 of his deity and relationship with God the Father.

Our response to the identity of Jesus is all that matters when considering His words and works. During Hanukkah, the crowd is outraged by Jesus’ bold claims. If Jesus is who he says he is, then He should be worshipped and obeyed.

Jesus the Savior (v22-30) - During the festival, many want to hear plainly from Jesus about who he is. Are you the Christ, the Savior-King of God’s people? Jesus’ previous words and action should be enough to determine this. He is here to give people eternal life with Him saving them from the consequences of sin and death.

Jesus the Son (v31-39) – Given clarity, the response from many to Jesus is not to receive Him but reject him. They seek his death because He claims to be God. Jesus’ works show He is doing the will of His Father. They don’t accept His true words or His powerful works, instead they seek to arrest Him.

Jesus the True (v40-41) - John the Baptizer spoke of Jesus’ words and works. As John’s followers encounter Jesus, they see everything that was said about Him is true and they believe.

Our problem isn’t that Jesus has been unclear and we’ve misunderstood, but where He has been clear, we do not want to receive it. Jesus is clear on His identity (Son of God), His purpose (Savior – King) and our need (eternal life). God should be outraged that we have falsely made ourselves equal with Him which makes us deserving of death. God responds by sending His Son who IS God to be rejected and killed so we may live.

Ironically, Jesus now stands next to the temple where sacrifices had been given but soon, the veil in the temple would be torn. Jesus walks away as he is about to be stoned as his time has not come just yet.

Seattle Area Pastors Network is a group of dozens of gospel-centered pastors praying for the day when every man, woman and child in the Seattle Area will have a daily encounter with Jesus in word and deed.

Leaders from this network gather four times a year for prayer, learning, and building each other up. Each year they take the opportunity to learn key preaching themes in a book of the Bible from a world class seminary professor during a one day intensive. We follow up with crafting a robust sermon series from this book, selecting key commentaries/books for pastoral study, drafting rough sermon outlines/text breakdowns, and developing this discipleship guide for individual/small group study.

We have selected portions of this larger collaborative effort to make up the majority of this study guide with edits to make it more applicable to the ECF family. Due to it being written by various pastors, you will notice unique styles, formats and voices from pastors with a variety of backgrounds and contexts. We hope that as you study and examine several “portraits” contained in the book of John that you will fall in love with Jesus more than ever and allow him to continue to transform you into his image.

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