

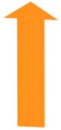
SEVEN ARROWS



What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

JOHN 3:1-21



The Gospels provide a number of memorable stories describing salvation in vivid detail. You're likely familiar with one of the verses from Jesus' interaction with a Pharisee named Nicodemus. This ruler knew Jesus was special because he'd heard Jesus' teaching and had seen His miracles. Jesus told Nicodemus that He couldn't know God or enter His kingdom unless he was born again. This image was strange to Nicodemus, who questioned how someone could be reborn as an adult. Jesus isn't speaking of spiritual rebirth. Because of Adam's sin, the first birth enters us into a life of slavery to sin which ultimately results in death. Jesus offers a new birth through faith that enters us into a life of worship to God. The offer of new life is possible because God loved His children so much that He gave Jesus on our behalf. Whoever believes-regardless of their past mistakes or failures-can enter the kingdom of God by faith in Jesus.

JOHN 4:1-30



In Jesus' time on earth, no one would ever expect to see a Jewish man speaking with a Samaritan woman-much less a woman with such a colorful past. The woman at the well came in search of water, but the true need was in her heart. Jesus knew her sin, as well as the guilt and shame she experienced. The well appropriately pictured what was happening in her heart. She was trying to fill the thirst of her heart by repeatedly lowering herself into sin, but sin could never quench her thirst. Jesus offered her an alternative. She could come to Him and never thirst again, because He is a well of living water that will never run dry. Her options mirror ancient Israel, who had the offer of living water, but chose to dig their own cisterns that couldn't hold water. This woman had been digging cisterns all her life, but she encountered the source of living water, and He offered the eternal salvation. She walked back into town, no longer a broken woman looking for satisfaction, but a woman who had been transformed by Jesus' offer of life.

LUKE 9:10-17



In Samaria, Jesus used water to point a sinful woman to salvation. Here, He used food to do the same thing. Jesus' disciples were unsure how to feed the large crowds that had gathered, but Jesus wasn't worried. He took five loaves of bread and a couple of fish to feed all 5,000 men, plus the women and children. Not only did Jesus feed them, but the food never ran out. The people ate until they were all full, and there were leftovers. The twelve disciples each filled a basket of the remaining food, which are probably symbolic of the way god provided food for the twelve tribes of Israel during their time in the wilderness. God continued giving them food-this time through His Son, Jesus. Soon Jesus would break bread again to show what would happen to His body, which was broken on a Roman cross. Jesus' body provides salvation to all those who trust Him in faith. Those who do will have the hunger of their souls eternally satisfied.

JOHN 10:1-21



Jesus used another familiar image to describe His love for His people and His mission in the world. Like a shepherd who lives to care for His sheep, Jesus lives to care for His people. He's not like a robber or a thief, who hurt the sheep and lead them to destruction. He's a good shepherd who strives to lead them to places they can thrive and be safe from harm. Jesus loves His sheep so much that He lays down His life for them. No one can take Jesus' life from Him, but He gave it up willingly for the salvation of His sheep, in Israel and the nations. Those who know Him as their shepherd-who hear His voice-will be gathered together into one flock with Jesus as the Great Shepherd. They will follow Him and experience the abundant life He created His people to experience.

PSALM 23















God uses the imagery of shepherds and sheep to describe His mission, and the work of the great Shepherd described in John 10 is also seen in many places throughout the Old Testament. Psalm 23 beautifully pictures the work of the shepherd. At each movement in this Psalm, God is the primary One doing the work: He makes me lie down, He leads me, He goes with me, He comforts me, He prepares a table for me. The sheep get to experience the joy that comes from following a shepherd who loves them dearly and leads them faithfully. They have nothing to fear. Even though they may experience pain, the good Shepherd guides them, walking with them to ensure that they arrive at their destination safely. The good and merciful Shepherd is the ever-present companion of the sheep.