



Episode 1 – The Word – John 1:1-18

The Context

Welcome as you enter, possibly for the very first time, the Gospel according to John. Turning to the beginning of the New Testament you first come across the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. So, you might then wonder, why aren't we starting with the Gospel according to Matthew? What makes John's so special?

Not better, but certainly not worse, John's Gospel is unique. Of the people who walked with Jesus during his three years of ministry, perhaps none knew him better than John. Where Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very similar in the accounts they record of Jesus' life, John stands distinct, sharing moments in the ministry of Jesus that you can read of only in this Gospel.

Through the Gospel of John, we see the story of Jesus on full display as witness the words, works, and wonders of Christ. The good news, which is what Gospel literally means, is that the heart of Jesus is for everyone. He is for us! Jesus is for grace, for new life, and for second chances.

Time Alone

Along with this book, have your Bible and a pen ready. The only person who needs to be on your mind right now is God. The only care that needs to be on your heart right now is to spend this time with Him. God is ready to meet you in this space. Be present.

Read John 1:1-18.

Countless books and papers have been written attempting to grasp the full significance of what John is saying in just the first 3 verses of chapter 1. But there is something here that is essential if we want to really understand the heart of God.

Jesus, who is called 'the Word' by John, was with God the Father in the beginning, and is himself God the Son. It is through Jesus that all things were created as God the Father spoke seven times his "Let there be..." in Genesis 1. And when the time was right, John writes in verse 11, "He came to that which was his own..."

The Creator descended from the heavens to walk with us, as one of us. "...but his own did not receive him."

Jesus clothed his heavenly body with the flesh of his creation, only to have it one day nailed to a cross. This was no surprise to him, an outcome he had already foreseen. And yet, Jesus came so that all who receive him and believe will be saved.

As we pour into the first 4 chapters of John over the next 7 weeks, what do you hope to come away with?

Make a note to come back to this question at the end of this book, using this answer as a point of reference to see God's work in your life over these 7 weeks.)

Just in these first 18 verses alone, John makes a number of significant theological statements about the person Jesus of Nazareth. He is:

- Eternal
- Fully God (Son of God)
- Became fully human

- Grace and truth
- Maker of the universe
- The light of the world

In verse 12 we read that there is offered before us, as one pastor put it, our option for adoption. To those who receive Jesus and believe in His name, the right to become children of God will be given.

There is no greater question that each of us has to answer, nor one that has a more profound impact upon our lives than this. Who do you believe Jesus is? Is the Jesus that John describes the one you receive and believe in, or is there something holding you back?

Why do you (or do you not) believe that Jesus is who the Bible says he is?

If someone were to ask what you mean by “believing” in God, how would you explain not what you believe in, but what it means for you to believe?

Verse 5 holds a promise for all who believe in Jesus, that he is the light. Now for some, maybe even you, this truth has been a lifesaving source of hope. Darkness is oppressive and obscuring, but the good news is that darkness never has overcome the light of Christ Jesus.

How would you explain to someone the kind of darkness John is writing about?

Has this kind of darkness ever been a part of your story? Is it still defining your life today, or has the light of Jesus removed such darkness from your life? If so, how did the light overcome the darkness you were in?

In Exodus 33:18 we read of what is perhaps the boldest demand anyone has ever made before God! Through a series of unimaginable miracles Moses delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, parted the waters of the Red Sea, and was audibly hearing the voice of God as Moses spoke with God in the Tent of Meetings. Even one of these moments are far beyond what any of us can say we've experienced of the power and might of God. And yet, Moses hungered for more.

"Then Moses said, 'Now show me your glory.'" Exodus 33:18 NIV

No matter what translation you turn to, one thing you won't find within verse 18 is a question mark at the end. Context is important here, and when you get the time, you really should read all of Exodus chapter 33 to grasp why Moses had the confidence and faith to demand such a thing from God. But that doesn't diminish the fact that what follows in the rest of this chapter is Moses only getting to see the back of God as God himself passed by Moses as he was hidden in the cleft of a rock.

But in John 1:14 we read that God the Son took on flesh, drank our water and breathed our air, and "...we have seen his glory..."^{NIV}

Later in John 14:9, Jesus says that if you have seen him, you have seen the Father. The fullness of God dwelled among us in the flesh as Jesus. So, while today we can't look upon Jesus in the flesh, John did, and has written about it so that through his Gospel we might also look upon the glory of God in a way that Moses never did!

Will you commit to praying through these 7 weeks for God to show you His glory?

Time Together

Whether you are a part of a small group or have decided to get together with a couple of friends to discuss Sunday's teaching over coffee, this section of questions is provided to help guide a group discussion. Our hope is that these questions, along with sharing from moments during your personal study time, will lead to conversations that are both edifying and life changing.

Before coming into your own faith, who for you was the best example of what it means to believe in Jesus?

Was there anything that this person did, or didn't do, that really stood out to you?

Have someone read John 1:13

Have someone read Colossians 1:15-17

Much of what John, and Paul in Colossians, write in these Scriptures parallel with each other, but Paul goes one step further with what he says in the last phrase of verse 16.

"...all things have been created through him and for him." (Emphasis mine) Colossians 1:16 NIV

What do you think Paul means by saying that all things have been created for Jesus?

Does this, or should this, change the way you view things such as your house, your car, your finances?

Does this, or should this, change the way we view ourselves as those who have been created in the image of God?

Time for More

If you are looking to grow in your knowledge of the Bible and desire to have a plan for further reading, here is a list of Scriptures that cross reference to certain parts within this week's text. A cross reference is two biblical texts that share similar meaning, and reading these is an effective way to expand your understanding of the Bible as one book, divided into 66 little books, all centered on Jesus Christ.

John 1:1 ↔ Genesis 1:1

John 1:1-3, 11-13, 16-18 ↔ Colossians 1:15-20

John 1:4-5 ↔ 1 John 1:5-7; 2:8

John 1:14 ↔ Exodus 33



Episode 2 – The Seven – John 1:19-51

The Context

At the end of the Old Testament is the book of Malachi, and turning to the beginning of the New Testament we find the Gospel of Matthew. But when you turn what may be just the one page that separates the Old from the New, you are passing through 400 years of silence where God withheld from speaking to the Jewish people. The prophecies foretold of a coming Messiah, the anointed one of God who would be the savior of the people, but they didn't know when. So they waited, and they watched.

In the waiting, still unbeknownst to the world that the Messiah was dwelling among men, John the Baptist had gained a following. People were trailing this street corner preacher throughout the desert lands because he was foretelling of a coming hope that the Jewish people had lost sight of over the centuries of silence. At the same time, he also acquired the attention of the Jewish leaders. And so, we find the stage set for John to complete the task of preparing the way of the Lord.

There are few places in the Bible where we see humility abound more beautifully than with John the Baptist. Jesus is beginning to gather his disciples, the limelight is starting to shift away from John, and as we venture into this week's text be inspired to take the time to learn from the life of John, who sought only to make known the name of Jesus.

Time Alone

Along with this book, have your Bible and a pen ready. The only person who needs to be on your mind right now is God. Trust that the world around you isn't going to implode while you take some time to step away to step into an exclusive moment with God. Close the world out so you can really let God in.

Read John 1:19-51

Who are you? After 400 years of waiting and watching for a sign that God was again moving amongst His people, it stands to reason that John the Baptist was far from being the first to be asked by the Jewish leaders with bated breath, "Who are you?"

But in verse 29, the moment when Jesus first enters into the narrative of John's Gospel and into the presence of John the Baptist, the first words spoken by John tell of a man who knew with utter certainty that the one he had been looking for his entire life was before him.

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29 NIV

In fact, looking through all four Gospels, not once do we read of any of the twelve disciples called by Jesus asking the question, who are you? From Matthew the tax collector, to James and John, sons of Zebedee, these unassuming men recognized Jesus in a way that the religious leaders of their day never did.

Was there ever a moment in your life when the Jesus you had been taught growing up, or the Jesus you had been looking for out of pain and perhaps desperation, became undeniably present and you KNEW that this is the One you had been looking for?

Has it ever felt like 400 years since you last felt God's hand at work in your life? Might it be that today feels like another day of living in that 400 yearlong page between the Old and New Testaments? There can certainly be seasons in life when what feels like God's absence may be perceived as God being one who watches us, idle and uncaring of our pains and sufferings. Let these words of Paul dispel any troubled thoughts you may carry about God.

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” Romans 5:6 NIV

We also need to be real about the fact that for many people, and honestly for all of us to some extent, there are times when we reject the call of Jesus to follow Him into what we truly need. John doesn't describe at length the calling of the twelve disciples the way the other 3 Gospels do. But in verse 43 of chapter 1 we read the same invitation given to Phillip as was given to all the rest, “Follow me.”^{NIV}

Has there been a specific moment when you knew that God was calling you to surrender control and follow Him? How did you respond, and whether you followed or fumbled, in what ways did your life change?

In his book The Knowledge of the Holy, A.W. Tozer wrote, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

That moment when your pulse quickens, your fingers and feet start to dance, and you have the unshakable sense that God is impressing upon you an opportunity to follow Him; what comes to mind when you think about God deeply influences the choices you make next. At one far end is the mind tainted with doubt and disbelief in the power and promises of God. At the other, far to opposite, is the mind of child-like faith that places full trust and reliance in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do you whole-heartedly believe God to be worthy of your full trust?

If you say yes, how does your life attest to you placing your full trust in Jesus as you follow him? If you say no, what hinders you from trusting that no greater life can be had than one fully surrendered to Jesus?

Imagine yourself literally following behind Jesus, when he turns around to look at you and then asks, “What are you seeking?” John 1:38 ESV

This question might seem rather straightforward, at first leading you to believe that Jesus simply wants to know what it is you are looking to gain by following him. But the longer you follow the Messiah, you begin to realize that even our thoughts aren't

a mystery to him. He hears them, knows them, and speaks into what was never spoken.

Thinking back to the question that Jesus first asked you, you begin to wonder, “Did Jesus ask me what I was seeking so he would know, or so that I would?”

As you decidedly live a life set on following Jesus, what are you seeking?

Time Together

Whether you are a part of a small group or have decided to get together with a couple of friends to discuss Sunday’s teaching over coffee, this section of questions is provided to help guide a group discussion. Our hope is that these questions, along with sharing from moments during your personal study time, will lead to conversations that are both edifying and life changing.

What are three names of God that you spiritually connect with the most?

Have someone read Leviticus 14:12-13,19-20

Have someone read John 1:29

Apart from Jesus, John the Baptist knew before anyone else what the Messiah had ultimately come to do. Nowhere else and by no one else in the four Gospels is Jesus called the Lamb of God, except by John the Baptist twice in this first chapter of John’s Gospel. Before him stood a dead man walking, the sacrificial lamb pure and without fault, worthy and appointed to be slain so that the sins of the world may be washed away in his blood.

Throughout John’s entire Gospel, perhaps the greatest piece of Good News might just be these words of John the Baptist in verse 29. Jesus died so that all of our sins may be forgiven in him.

Do you fully believe and trust that in Jesus our sins were nailed to the cross and they condemn us no more?

How in your life have you proclaimed this Good News to others?

People seldom need convincing they have sin in their life. The hardest part is helping them believe that in Christ they can be forgiven. Often we fall short of sharing the full Gospel because, while we willfully tell people that God loves them, what many are needing to hear is that God desires to forgive them and forever take away the guilt and shame of their sins.

How can we encourage one another to be bold in our faith? How can we encourage one another to share in love and the truth that God offers to those who believe in him? How can we encourage one another to live in the forgiveness of sins bought by the blood of Jesus Christ?

Time for More

If you are looking to grow in your knowledge of the Bible and desire to have a plan for further reading, here is a list of Scriptures that cross reference to certain parts within this week's text. A cross reference is two biblical texts that share similar meaning and reading these is an effective way to expand your understanding of the Bible as one book, divided into 66 little books, all centered on Jesus Christ.

John 1:23 ↔ Isaiah 40:3-5

John 1:29 ↔ Revelation 5:6-14

John 1:32-24 ↔ Matthew 3:13-17

John 1:51 ↔ Genesis 28:10-13



Episode 3 – The Party – John 2:1-12

The Context

When studying the context, especially as it applies to a smaller story within a larger narrative, understanding what took place before and after the main text is crucial. In Latin the word *con* means “together”. Joining this with the word *texere*, which means “weave”, and the most literal meaning for the word context is “to weave together”.

In this section of John 2, we take the story of Jesus attending a wedding banquet with his mother and disciples, where he performs his first miracle by turning water into wine and ask the question of context. How does this small story weave together with the bigger story that is being told in John’s Gospel?

While a chronological timeline compiled from the four gospels places this miracle as the first in Jesus’ ministry, what is interesting to note is that this account is recorded only here in the Gospel of John. Why is that important?

Both Mark and Luke are Gospels written second-hand, from the memories told to them by those who personally witnessed the life and ministry of Jesus. Matthew, the author of the first Gospel, was such a witness, but according to the timeline that he gives in his Gospel, the calling he received from Jesus to follow him didn’t occur until after several miracles had already taken place.

John was the only Gospel writer who was there to witness the first miracle of Jesus. Perhaps there is great personal significance for John in the sharing of the first time he saw Jesus do the impossible. It could be that this was the point when John began to believe that Jesus was in fact the Messiah, which would explain why he writes in verse 11, “What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.” John 2:11 NIV

But the heart of the Christian, the desire of John expressed later in his Gospel, is to proclaim the goodness of God so that others may too believe in the salvation brought to us through Jesus, Son of God.

“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John 20:30-31 NIV

Time Alone

Along with this book, have your Bible and a pen ready. Begin your time by asking God to place within your heart an unwavering trust that His Word does not return void, that our prayers do not go unheard, and that this time spent seeking to know Him more is not wasted.

Read John 2:1-12

First, here is a bit of history that is helpful to know. During the days of Jesus, the highlight of someone's life was most often their wedding and afterparty, which was a spare-no-expense-event usually lasting for days. To run out of wine before the party was over wasn't just an embarrassing inconvenience, it was a cultural disgrace that would shame a family for years. So, we see the concern that exists for this bride and groom in Cana. For reasons we can only guess, Mary comes to her son with this hope that if anyone can save this party, he can.

Jesus is about to make a first impression. The world had not seen the divine power of God since long before anyone at this wedding feast could remember. At his chosen moment, Jesus could have set the bar as high as bringing the dead back to life or defined himself through the casting out of demons or by healing the sick. As bewildering as it may be, Jesus first beckons for his disciples to believe in his divinity by creating more wine for a floundering party.

Has there ever been a time when you found yourself in a dismal situation, and only by the grace of God was there an outcome far better than you could have ever hoped for?

From the time you first recognized that the Christian life is centered on following Jesus, was your impression that such a life is dull and withdrawn, fun and exciting, or something different altogether?

In verse 11 there is one word that dramatically influences the way we understand why John recorded this story of Jesus turning water into wine. Yes, it was Jesus' first miracle, but John doesn't call this work of Jesus as such. The word used, which is the same word no matter the Bible translation you read from, is the word signs. "What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory..." John 2:11 NIV (emphasis mine)

Part of our reality is that life is guaranteed to have its moments when it feels like the wine has run out. It comes in the poor choices that bring upon us shame with no redemption in sight. It comes in the moments of tragedy that leaves us feeling helpless to fix what is broken. It comes when the long seasons of life feel as though they have reached an endless winter, and there is nothing left but to wait. Such times may leave you believing there is no more wine.

Find the deeper wisdom of God, shared with us in the living words of Scripture. We see Jesus turning water into wine, but the sign, the greater significance of this first impression of Jesus is that He is the true master of the banquet. He is the hope for the hopeless, the healing for the broken, the joy for the sorrowful. In this sign Jesus is foretelling us of the day that will come when the choice wine is served first and poured without end!

*⁶On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines.*

*⁷On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
⁸he will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.
The Lord has spoken. - Isaiah 25:6-8 NIV*

Don't answer this question too quickly, because your answer might not be what you'd like to write down. What is it that you focus your life on that has kept you going even through the darkest valleys?

If you didn't write down something that is centered on Jesus, what do you have to lose putting your life in the hands of the master of the eternal party? From where you are at today, what is there to gain?

For those who are sitting at the table with Jesus, how has the joy of the Lord been your strength?

Time Together

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Have someone read Revelation 19:6-9

Isaiah prophesied it, Jesus signified it, and in Revelation we read what God revealed to John of it. There will come a day when the bride, the Church, will wed herself to the bridegroom, Jesus, and for all eternity God's people will live in festival joy.

In Galatians 5:22, Paul makes clear that love, joy, and peace are among the fruits of the Spirit that Christians are to hold to as essential qualities of their life.

Even if by all earthly accounts there is no reason for you to have joy or peace, has there been a time you've still had those fruits of the Spirit because of your faith in the one who turns water into wine?

Does anyone currently find themselves weathering a season where it feels like the wine has run out and the joy is gone? How can this group pray for you and encourage you to seek from Jesus the joy that he brings to those who draw near?

Have someone read Philippians 3:12-14

In what ways does looking ahead change the way we live right now?

Time for More

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John 2:1-12 ↔ Psalm 36

John 2:1:11 ↔ Hebrews 2:1-4



Episode 4 – The New Temple – John 2:13-25

The Context

As you work through the Gospel of John, the symbolic moments of Jesus' life that brings to light the grand narrative of Scripture should astonish you. The Lamb of God, as John the Baptist appropriately labels Jesus, begins his ministry at the time of Passover, the Jewish festival celebrating the night in Egypt when the Angel of Death passed over the homes of those who had painted their doorposts with the blood of a spotless lamb.

Jesus is now in Jerusalem, surrounded by millions of Jews who have gathered at the temple to offer their animal sacrifice, unaware that among them walks the Lamb of God who is to be crucified in this very city three years later. But as Jesus approaches the temple, instead of hearing the sounds of prayer and worship, he is met with the sight of animals and money tables in the temple courts.

What likely angered Jesus the most wasn't that people were selling animals for travelers to purchase for sacrifice, or that money changers were at their tables converting currency for the temple tax. Such things were common practice, though corruption for profit wasn't unusual. The problem was that the place for worship had become a place for business.

Time Alone

Along with this book, have your Bible and a pen ready. Pray that you will come to know such a great love of Jesus that everything else competing for your time falls into a lesser place. Yet, there will be days when you simply have to trust that the time spent in devotions is more precious than time spent anywhere else.

Read John 2:13-25

If you own a piano, especially one that is played often, you know that you have to get it tuned on a consistent basis in order for the instrument to play a song as it was meant to be heard. On a well-built piano it can be a slow fade, and the one key just slightly out of tune easily becomes tolerated and forgotten. But over time the imperfections multiply, and what may sound like a ruined instrument to another may go utterly unnoticed by the owner of the piano.

As Jesus is walking closer to the temple in Jerusalem, his ears are filled with the sounds of an instrument that has long been in need of tuning. The people had forgotten the sounds of worship as God desired for it be heard from the temple built by his own people.

When was the last time you walked into the auditorium, sat undistracted in your seat before worship began, and asked yourself, “What am I here for? God, what is it I seek to do in this place?”

If you have, what was the answer? And if you haven’t, imagine yourself right now sitting in the auditorium, and ask God those questions. What answers did you find?

Did you know that the word sanctuary is never used in the New Testament as a name for the place where Christians gather to worship? Used throughout the Old Testament as the word to describe the sacred place where God dwelt among His people, Jesus tells those questioning his authority to cleanse the temple that he will become the temple/sanctuary of his people, for his people.

“For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.”
Hebrews 9:24 NIV

Through Jesus, whose Spirit dwells in those who believe in him, we are able to be in the presence of God the Father. Our opportunity to draw near to God is abundantly more than it was for those who drew near to Him in the days of the temple in Jerusalem. A temple that was built in 46 years by human hands. Jesus is our temple, and the sanctuary is now a sacred place within us where God dwells as the Holy Spirit!

With this in mind, how do you think God wants us to understand the significance of our weekly gatherings for worship? Is it an added benefit, or foundational to your life in Christ?

From here it is wise to proceed with caution, because like the pianist who no longer notices the out of tune notes, it is dangerous to trust our feelings as reality. We may feel like all is well, that God is pleased, and there is significance in what we are doing, but that isn’t always the truth. So, we need to ask ourselves, and not just once, what is the benchmark by which we measure our health and the health of the local church we attend?

Quite honestly this leads us into a subject that requires far more consideration than what we have the time for in this one episode, but there is one answer to this question that we simply can’t afford to miss in this week’s text. Jesus. Individually and collectively as the church, we are spiritually the healthiest when everything we do centers on Jesus.

When we seek for ourselves glory, honor, and praise for our professed works of faith, the piano is going out of tune. When the teachings of the local church seek to glorify culture rather than glorify Christ, the piano is going out of tune. When the Jewish leaders of the temple in Jerusalem began to seek profits over providing a sacred place for the people to glorify God in worship, the piano was going out of tune.

Taking into account your actions and not your intentions over the past month, based upon the benchmark that a healthy spiritual life is one centered on Jesus, are you healthy?

If in this time God is revealing to you that there is something about your life not in tune with how God desires for you to live and glorify him, what is a practical next step you can take to better align yourself with Jesus?

Time Together

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While we may first consider how personally we are to remain focused and centered on Jesus, often our greatest opportunities to bring glory to God are found in community with other believers. The works we do in faith are magnified when done within the collective effort of the body of Christ, the Church.

Have someone read [Matthew 5:14-16](#)

Have someone else go to www.merriam-webster.com, search the word glory, and read off the definitions.

This teaching by Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount can be quite difficult for people to grasp because it requires great spiritual maturity and self-awareness. Jesus instructs his followers to be observed doing good works so that light may shine forth into the surrounding darkness.

What is the temptation and danger of receiving public recognition for good works?

Even so, Jesus says that we should let the people see our good deeds in order that what may happen?

How do we put aside our pride, walk humbly as followers of Christ, and allow our good works to be seen as we seek to make His name famous so that people will bring praise and honor to God?

Have someone read [Acts 2:42-47](#)

In verse 42 Luke, the writer of Acts, records the four fundamental aspects of the early Acts 2 church:

1. Apostle's teaching (the New Testament that we read today)
2. Fellowship
3. Breaking of bread (corporate worship)
4. Prayer

Verses 42-46 provide further insight as to how these tenets of the faith were lived out. Now, the importance of this portion of scripture relates to what Luke says at the end of verse 47, "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." NIV

The Lord does not add to what does not bring him glory. In all that Luke describes here in these few verses, the glorification of Jesus Christ our Lord was at the center, and daily people were being saved.

In your time together as a group, how can you be intentional about glorifying God in all that you do?

Time for More

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meaning and reading these is an effective way to expand your understanding of the Bible as one book, divided into 66 little books, all centered on Jesus Christ.

John 2:13 ↔ Exodus 12:1-30

John 2:21 ↔ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20



Episode 5 – The New Birth – John 3

The Context

Entering into chapter 3 of the Gospel of John, you may notice that we fail to receive a time stamp like we did at the beginning of chapter 2 and throughout incremental parts of chapter 1. Only a short amount of time has likely passed between the cleansing of the temple and this night visit from Nicodemus, and it is worth noting that Jesus is still in Jerusalem, somewhat surprisingly not as one detained for public disturbance in the temple courts. Considering this along with the words chosen by Nicodemus when addressing Jesus, it seems that Jesus has gained the curiosity of the people and not yet their rejection.

Being a rabbi as well, which is the Hebrew word for teacher, we can only assume that Nicodemus is speaking to Jesus on behalf of himself and other Jews of prominent position seeking to acknowledge and know more about this new man in town. Perhaps Jesus is being approached at night for the concealment it offers those who have something to lose speaking privately with Jesus. However, the answers Nicodemus risked finding likely aren't found in the way he had hoped in the rather cryptic words of Jesus.

In the second portion of chapter 3 we read that Jesus and his disciples leave Jerusalem and go out into the Judean countryside where John the Baptist is finishing the last leg of his ministry.

John the Baptist's words in verse 30 attest to his profound wisdom and understanding of the mission of Christ, purpose that Jesus himself had stated to Nicodemus beforehand. "He must become greater; I must become less."

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him." John 3:14-15 NIV

Time Alone

Along with this book, have your Bible and a pen ready. Take a few minutes to just sit in a quiet moment, calming your mind, turning off the distractions racing through your head, and be still. Be present before the Lord your God.

Read John 3

Historically speaking, there is far too much evidence to deny the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was a real person. In fact, there is more historical documentation proving that Jesus walked the earth than there is for Alexander the Great. The question is, like Alexander the Great, was Jesus of Nazareth merely a man who made a profound impact on the course of history, or was he more than merely human?

Admittedly brushing with broad strokes; the Muslims will say that Jesus was a prophet. The Hindus often accept Jesus as one of the millions of gods to worship. Agnostics might say that Jesus was a good person with important moral teachings, while atheists might agree with the agnostic, or take up the position that Jesus was one of the greatest imposters in recorded history.

Then there are the Jews. Through Nicodemus, we are privileged to see a rare glimpse into the inner turmoil of a deeply avowed Jew encountering the evidence that the Messiah was standing before him. But the Jews had such a clear preconceived idea of who the Messiah would be, and even more importantly what the Messiah would do, that many simply could not open their minds to the truth that Jesus was and is the Christ, the anointed Son of God.

A few weeks ago, you were asked if you whole-heartedly believe God to be worthy of your full trust. But if someone were to ask why you even believe in the first place that Jesus is who he says he is, Christ the Lord our Savior, what reasoning would you give?

"Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.'" John 3:3 NIV

Perhaps you might wonder if Jesus is speaking of the kingdom of God that we read of in Revelation that reigns eternal in the heavens, or the kingdom God has established on earth through the Church. What if it's both? By grace we are saved through faith placed in Jesus, reborn through the waters of baptism, and gifted with the dwelling of the Holy Spirit inside of us.

Thus, what if Jesus is saying that we not only forfeit our admission into the heavenly kingdom of God by refusing the call to faith, but we also remain blind to the kingdom of God that is at hand called the Church? Sure, we see the church buildings as we drive down the road. We can even go inside and listen to the songs of worship and hear the Bible taught from the pulpit.

What if we are simply unable to see the kingdom of God reigning on earth as the Church, the body of Christ, unless we are born again with the Spirit of God that gives us eyes to see what sin has hidden from us? Until we choose to believe that Jesus is in fact Christ the Lord, we are stuck like the Jews trying to fit Jesus into the mold of teacher rather than Savior. The Spirit of God gives us eyes to see what sin has hidden, we are unblinded and our hearts are able to comprehend the depth of truth, love, mercy, and grace that Jesus imparts to his followers.

If not yet, what keeps you from believing in and surrendering to the saving grace of Christ Jesus, so that you may be reborn into the kingdom of God?

If you are reborn, how has your faith in Jesus changed the way you see the kingdom of God working through the Church to actively impact your local community, our country, and even the world?

Coming to the end of chapter 3, verse 36 reemphasizes a critical point that John doesn't want his readers to miss from the moments of Jesus teaching Nicodemus, the testifying of John the Baptist, and the commentary of John himself in between the two. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them." John 3:36 NIV

In fact, throughout this chapter alone the phrase “who/whoever believes” is used four times. With such weight placed upon our belief in Jesus that comes before our second birth, this last question is one worth giving considerable time and effort to answer.

How would you explain to someone what it means to believe in Jesus? Is it just an acknowledgement that Jesus is who he says he is, or does this belief change things?

Time Together

Whether you are a part of a small group or have decided to get together with a couple of friends to discuss Sunday’s teaching over coffee, this section of questions is provided to help guide a group discussion. Our hope is that these questions, along with sharing from moments during your personal study time, will lead to conversations that are both edifying and life changing.

Have someone read [John 3:19-21](#)

Do you remember the last question from this episode’s Time Alone? Though not plainly said, it is implied by John that one aspect of believing in Jesus is to come into his light.

But what happens when we come into this light?

Jesus, the light of the world, exposes what is hidden in darkness so that we may bring it before God in repentance and receive forgiveness. But in contrast to what is exposed; is the works of God we find, revealed in and through us by the power of Jesus Christ!

If today you are truly walking in the light, what did you love that was hidden in the dark that Jesus exposed and did away with so that you could walk in light as he is in the light?

If within this group trust and transparency has been established, is there anything that you have kept hidden in the dark that needs to come into the light so that you can truly follow Jesus with your whole heart?

One part of the Christian life that can be exceedingly disheartening is when friends, and possibly family, push away and even reject you for walking in the light. John says that those who love the dark and hate the light do so because they fear having their deeds exposed in the light, and/or they love what they do in the darkness. Sometimes those in the dark feel threatened by being too close to those doing what is right and living in the light, a light that could begin to expose what they long to keep hidden.

This is one reason why being in community with other believers is so important.

Have someone read [Hebrews 10:19-25](#)

Time for More

If you are looking to grow in your knowledge of the Bible and desire to have a plan for further reading, here is a list of Scriptures that cross reference to certain parts within this week's text. A cross reference is two biblical texts that share similar meaning and reading these is an effective way to expand your understanding of the Bible as one book, divided into 66 little books, all centered on Jesus Christ.

John 3:5-6 ↔ 2 Corinthians 5:16-19

John 3:13 ↔ Proverbs 30:4

John 3:16-18 ↔ Romans 5:8-11

John 3:19-21 ↔ 1 John 1:5-10

John 3:29 ↔ Revelation 19:7-9

John 3:35 ↔ Daniel 7:13-14

John 3:35-36 ↔ Hebrews 1:1-3



Episode 6 – The Living Water – John 4:1-42

The Context

Enough time has passed in the Judean countryside for two things to happen; for John the Baptist's following to decrease as the number of those following Jesus increases, and for word to get back to the Pharisees in Jerusalem, and then back to Jesus, that powerful people are beginning to notice his rise in popularity. Jesus makes the decision that he and his disciples are going to venture north once again to Galilee, possibly in an effort to prevent any emerging tension that could damage or divide the ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist.

The shortest route from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north is to pass through the region of Samaria, where a race of people live who are as despised by Jews as the Jews despise them. In verse 4 John writes that Jesus had to go through Samaria, a detail that has led many to believe that because Jesus was obedient to the will of His Father, there must have been direction given to go through Samaria instead of taking the much longer way around.

Others reason that because of the considerable amount of extra time it would have taken to avoid Samaria on the way to Galilee, the journey required Jesus and his disciples to go through Samaria in order to save time. Whether the reason is the former or the latter we cannot know for sure, but this we do know, that Jesus

crossed over major cultural and social barriers of his day to declare through His actions that he was sent by the Father to love the world.

Time Alone

Along with this book, have your Bible and a pen ready. While this may have already begun to feel like another part of your weekly routine, take a minute to pray for God to help you come to these moments with a fresh mind and open heart to the new things God has brought with a new day.

Read John 4:1-42

The history between the Jews and Samaritans run deep, with hatred for one another escalating to the point of actual wars being fought for no other reason than to eliminate the existence of the other. Jews viewed the Samaritans as half-breeds, a race of people deriving from an ancestry of pureblooded Jews who intermarried with Gentiles (non-Jewish people), compromising their Jewish heritage and religious practices, and even building their own temple of worship in defiance of the temple in Jerusalem.

Without hesitation the Jewish people looked upon the Samaritans with disgust and condemnation. But God, "...did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:17 NIV

Have you ever wondered if God really means everyone? Perhaps it is no mere coincidence that following John 3:17 is the narrative in John 4 where Jesus reveals his identity as the Messiah to a Samaritan woman.

Is there a Samaritan in your life, someone you are repulsed by and in your heart feel no desire to share the hope of Christ with? What if Jesus were to place a conviction upon your heart to be the one who testifies of the living water to the Samaritan in your life?

There is something remarkable about this Samaritan woman that, even if you've read this story before and have heard it taught from the pulpit, you still may have not considered. In verse 12 she says that her ancestral father is Jacob, that man that God would name Israel in the Old Testament book of Genesis. The Samaritans adhered to the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) but rejected the rest of the Jewish scriptures. She reveals to Jesus in verse 20 a desire for worship, but Jesus says that her people worship what they do not know. And in verse 25 she exclaims that she and her people are waiting for the Messiah to bring truth and understanding.

Isn't it remarkable that no matter how far from the truth of God's Word someone's religious beliefs might stray, like the Samaritan woman, we all share the same desire to find the truth to three basic questions: where do I come from (her father Jacob), what is the purpose for my life (worship on the mountain), and what hope do I have for tomorrow (awaited Messiah)?

If not for someone else to one day hear, then maybe you simply need to write down and read this from your own hand. What do you believe is the truth about where you come from, the purpose for your life, and the hope that you have for tomorrow?

Following the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, the disciples urge their teacher to eat from the food that they had gone out to purchase. Jesus answers that his food, what sustains him, is doing the will of the Father. And then, speaking strong words that might feel rather unexpected, Jesus says, "Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." John 4:35 NIV

From the beginning of this chapter in verse 2 we gather that Jesus' disciples were already baptizing new believers, so we would believe the disciples understood the kind of work that Jesus had called them to. Instead, it could be that the disciples were failing to see that even in the fields of Samaria, Jesus was planting seeds of faith. What they thought was a rest stop on their way north to Galilee was more than just a chance to gather food and get a drink. Jesus was building his kingdom, sowing in soil that no Jew would think faith could grow. But it did, and Jesus tells his disciples to open their eyes and see the people of Samaria as a people loved by God, thirsting for the living water. Labor even for them.

When you walk through a store, or down your street, or sit in a restaurant, do you ever look around at the people and wonder if they are dying of thirst for the living water that comes only from Jesus? Have you ever asked yourself, "God, are these the people I am called to make disciples from?"

Take some time to write out a prayer, asking God to help you open your eyes so that you won't miss the opportunities all around you to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, to guide people in their next steps of faith, and to show them the true love of God.

Time Together

Whether you are a part of a small group or have decided to get together with a couple of friends to discuss Sunday's teaching over coffee, this section of questions is provided to help guide a group discussion. Our hope is that these questions, along with sharing from moments during your personal study time, will lead to conversations that are both edifying and life changing.

Have someone read [John 4:39-42](#)

Jesus didn't resolve centuries of resentment and hatred between the Jews and Samaritans during his two days in Samaria. Tensions would remain high long after the days of Jesus walking the earth as in human form. But, in John 4 Jesus radically redefined the way his disciples were to understand the scope of God's Kingdom. The Gospel is for everyone.

Why is it that so many Christians, possibly even many or all of us in this group, find taking our faith outside of the church building and into our communities so intimidating?

We shouldn't minimize the fact that Jesus used the testimony of one Samaritan woman to draw numerous Samaritans to himself, the well of living water. The fields were so ripe for harvest in Samaria that Jesus and his disciples stayed for two days.

But the impact of that day is believed to be seen in the days of the early church, when Philip goes into Samaria proclaiming about the Messiah.

Have someone read [Acts 8:4-8](#)

Was there ever a moment you can remember when seeing the power of God at work in someone else's life created or magnified a longing to see God work in your own?

If you haven't already done so within this group, take an appropriate amount of time to share testimonies. Not only do we share to edify and encourage one another through testifying about the goodness of God witnessed in our own lives, but let this group also consider how these testimonies may spark a desire in others to know more about Jesus.

Time for More

If you are looking to grow in your knowledge of the Bible and desire to have a plan for further reading, here is a list of Scriptures that cross reference to certain parts within this week's text. A cross reference is two biblical texts that share similar meaning and reading these is an effective way to expand your understanding of the Bible as one book, divided into 66 little books, all centered on Jesus Christ.

John 4:10 ↔ Jeremiah 2:13

John 4:14 ↔ Ezekiel 47:1-12

John 4:22 ↔ 2 Kings 17:24-41

John 4:24 ↔ Philippians 3:3

John 4:34 ↔ Deuteronomy 8:3

John 4:35 ↔ Matthew 9:36-38



Episode 7 – The Word (Part 2) – John 4:43-54

The Context

As we bring to a close John Season 1, it is worth taking a moment to consider that the place Jesus returns to here at the end of chapter 4 is the same place he performed his first miracle, in Galilee. And not just in Galilee, but Jesus is even going to return to Cana, where the wedding banquet took place and Jesus turned water into wine. In the three chapters that fall between the bookends of Cana, consider all that Jesus has already done. John Season 1 has only scratched the surface of what John witnessed and wrote about on the life of Christ.

Now, not surprisingly, a person doesn't turn gallons upon gallons of water into wine and clear out the temple courts in Jerusalem without making a name for himself. Jesus returns to Cana and quickly finds that his reputation is beginning to draw people seeking things other than the Messiah. Thus begins a model of evangelism that Jesus will repeat throughout his ministry; meet the people where they are at, the point of their most pressing need, and then begin to show them where they truly need to go.

Time Alone

Along with this book, have your Bible and a pen ready. Consider how blessed you are to have a Bible in your hands, knowledge of the Truth in your mind, and in your heart the calling of the Lord for you to go deeper, daring you to try and see how vast His love is for you.

Read John 4:43-54

Let's not assume that the royal official is coming to Jesus with any real confidence that this Jesus of Nazareth can heal his fatally ill son. Jesus has turned water into wine and displayed religious authority in the Jerusalem temple, but the Messiah has yet to perform a miraculous healing. This is a 20 mile walk of desperation from Capernaum to Cana for the official, having nothing to lose but the regret that you left one stone unturned.

Have you ever been in a moment like this, desperate to discover one more opportunity to find hope, so with nothing left but a prayer you plead for God to do something?

Don't be afraid to allow your emotions to surface as you answer this next question. Whether it's rejoicing or unresolved anger that wells up in your heart, Jesus calls us to come just as we are.

Did God answer your prayer in the way that you asked?

No one but God can truly speak as to why some will have their desperate prayers answered with the new job that gets the mortgage paid and food on the table, the change of heart that brings newfound healing and restoration to the failing marriage, the healing of a dying child that medicine said it could not heal. No one but God can give an answer as to why many desperate prayers still see the house foreclose, the marriage divorce, or the child gone too soon.

But no prayer ever goes unanswered.

In his love for the world, why did God give us his one and only Son? "...that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16^b NIV

Before telling the official that his son would live, Jesus says in verse 48, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe." NIV

Why do you believe Jesus healed the official's son?

So it seems that the purpose for which Jesus healed the official's son was not to spare this father from having to grieve the loss of his child, but so that through this wonderous sign a family would come to believe in Jesus.

Our greatest need isn't to have a good paying job, have plenty of food to eat, or even be healed of cancer. Though these things may come as an answer to prayer, in God's love for us he gives us a promise in Philippians 4 that in Christ Jesus all of our true needs will be met. But, how important are things even such as these when compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus? Do you we pray for such things? Of course! But let these prayers always be in the periphery of eyes that are fixed on the salvation found in Jesus Christ our Savior.

What does the things you pray for say about what you hold most important in life?

Friend, if there is one thing that this life teaches that we can trust to happen, it's that trials will come and storms will take what once was a calm sea and turn it into something down right ugly. If there is one thing that the Bible teaches us that we can trust, it is in the one who told the winds and the waves to be still, and they obeyed.

As John Season 1 comes to an end, perhaps this is where a new chapter for you needs to begin, one that tells the story of a follower of Christ who in faith chose to trust in the goodness of God, even when walking through the darkest of valleys.

Maybe for others the aim is to write yet another chapter in your book that tells of a life built upon the hope that you have in Jesus Christ, Son of God who saved us from our sins by dying for them upon a criminal's cross.

If Jesus didn't fail us then, trust that he won't fail us now.

How do you focus your eyes on Jesus when the storms of this world seem to take aim at your life? Do you have a favorite Bible verse or song you reflect upon when God has not answered your prayers as you hoped? If so, write out the verse or lyrics below.

Time Together

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Have someone read [John 4:43-54](#)

The official asked Jesus to go back with him to Capernaum, maybe having it in his mind that Jesus had to see his child in order to heal him, or physically be there to lay hands upon him. But Jesus tells him to go, that what the father has asked for has already been done to the son.

Now comes the full day's walk back to Capernaum, leaving behind the man who was your last source of hope. But John writes, "The man took Jesus at his word and departed." John 4:50 NIV

Have you ever received a word from God, such as an affirmation or promise, maybe a strong sense of calling or peace, but fulfillment of that word required you to wait?

What happens in the waiting?

Let's really consider those hours that the official was walking back to his home having nothing but the word of Jesus that he had made the choice to believe, because these hours represent years and even seasons of life of some people. There are many promises from God in the Scriptures that we have the choice to believe in but requires that we walk many miles until we see those promises fulfilled.

Having chosen to believe the word of Jesus that his son would be healed, how do you picture the way this father walked back to Capernaum? With joy and excitement? Angst and worry? Fearfully or with great peace?

How are you walking right now? Though life has many uncertainties, we have the word of the Lord that salvation is freely offered to all who believe. Are you taking Jesus at his word and walking with great joy and peace?

Time for More

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John 4:48 ↔ John 20:24-29