

Lesson One: John and Jesus

Unlock with Questions:

1. What are some of the things you like to find out about people when you first meet them?
2. Use a metaphor or simile (“like” or “as”) to describe yourself.
3. List two major ways you’ve changed over the past ten years.
4. What do you already know about the author, John the Apostle?
5. If someone was to describe your character, what two words would they use to describe what fills you and makes you *you*?

Unlock New Thoughts:

ABOUT JOHN

Meeting someone new: Around here, it’s, “How long have you been a Vol fan? How about that quarterback? What do you think about the new coach?” You might ask questions about hiking in the Smokies or ask if they attended UT, or what they do for a living.

But if you want to go beneath the surface, you ask more substantial questions or listen for deeper things:

How do they spend their time?

What are their priorities and values, their passions and pursuits?

Are they a person of faith?

What are their ethical and moral standards?

We’ve got two people to meet today: John, the author of the gospel we are studying, and Jesus, the subject of John’s book. I want to take you deeper into the lives of these two men, starting with John.

Character Sketch

When we meet him, young John is in the family business of fishing, working with his dad and his brother James. You notice that the young men are always together. They are business partners with Simon Peter.

He and James were nicknamed **Sons of Thunder**, so I imagine a loud, boisterous pair who fought and wrestled and yelled. They wanted to call down lightning on people who were not part of their group (Luke 9:49); they discussed who was the greatest. Yet in his old age, John is referred to as the **apostle of love** and refers to himself as “**the one whom Jesus loved**” when he wrote his gospel. He had done some changing. I believe his changes came about because he experienced life with Jesus for three solid years. So how did he and Jesus meet?

I believe John knew who Jesus was and had listened to Him already, because John the Baptist had pointed Jesus out to his own followers. But one day, Jesus walked to where Simon Peter, John, James, and Zebedee were fishing. They had fished all night and came in to shore. Jesus got into Peter's boat and began to teach. When He finished, He turned to Simon Peter and said, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because You say so, I will let down the nets." Simon caught such a huge catch that the nets began to break! He signaled to John, James, and Zebedee, and they filled both boats so full that they began to sink. All the men were astonished! Jesus then said, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." So they pulled their boats up on shore, and the young men left everything and followed Him. Luke 5:1-11.

John made his choice by leaving his nets. While he and his brother stayed together, **they both left their father holding the nets.** Profound changes in everyone's life.

Jesus may be calling you to draw nearer to Him today. Is there anything you need to put down or leave in order to follow Jesus? **Learn this lesson from John: Jesus is worth it. Leave the trinkets and go after true wealth. Leave the non-essential for the essential. Choose the most valuable over the less significant. Leave lesser loves behind and pursue the greatest Love: Jesus.**

Follower

It is likely that John left [John the Baptist] to follow Jesus. He was with Jesus for three years, quickly becoming one of Jesus' inner circle and ultimately Jesus' closest friend. I believe that's why John's gospel is so different: he doesn't write the same way as the other three gospels (synoptic). John focuses on **physical signs** (2:11,18,23; 4:54) **that speak of a spiritual truth**, as well as conversations, especially between Jesus and the disciples.

John's Point A—> Point B

So what are some things that John saw when he was with Jesus? Why did his life change?

John was with Jesus when Jesus turned **water into wine at a wedding**, turned over the greedy money-changers' **temple tables**, spoke with the Samaritan **woman at the well** (John 4), **healed long-distance**,

commanded **sickness and demons** to leave people, went Jesus against tradition by healing on the **Sabbath** (John 5), when Jesus claimed to be **God's Son** (John 5), and **fed the 5,000** (John 6), John handed out the bread. He was there.

When Jesus **walked on water** in strong waves (John 6), and claimed to be the bread of life (John 6),

when He **lost a majority of His followers** by talking about hard things (John 6), John was there.

When Jesus **caused unrest** among the people and in the politics of Jerusalem (John 7), freed a **woman caught in adultery** by saying, "Go and sin no more" while challenging her self-righteous accusers to see their own sin (John 8), John watched.

John saw Jesus **heal a man born blind** (John 9) and raise a dead man (**Lazarus**, John 11). John was there.

He saw Jesus transformed into a glorious, white-light being on the Mount of Transfiguration, and heard the very voice of God. John was there.

John was there when Jesus claimed to be the Bread of Life, the Light of the world, the Son of God, the Good Shepherd, the doorway to God, the resurrection and the life, the way and the truth. John heard all of these claims and pondered.

Jesus washed John's feet. During the Last Supper, John reclined at the table at Jesus' side, leaning on Him like an affectionate little brother would (John 21:20) and confidentially asked who Jesus' betrayer was. John listened as Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, and Helper. He heard Jesus pray (John 17) and command them to love like He loved; he heard Jesus' warnings of coming persecution.

John saw **Judas** lead soldiers to capture Jesus and witnessed his famous traitor's kiss. After running away, John was present as an onlooker at some of Jesus' trials and denials (John 18). He was able to stand at the **cross** with Jesus' **mother Mary** and receive her as his own. He cared for her the rest of her life (John 19).

After Jesus' death on the cross, John and Peter were the disciples who listened to Mary Magdalene say, "I have seen the Lord," and they jumped up and raced to the tomb. **John got there first ... and BELIEVED.** John was the one who could tell it was Jesus on the distant shore cooking a fish breakfast. John saw Thomas put his fingers into Jesus' wounds. He interacted with Jesus until Jesus went into Heaven. John was there when Jesus rose up and disappeared into the clouds.

Learn this lesson from John: time with Jesus will change a person. Do you need to carve out more time with Jesus? Are you with Him enough for Him to impact your life? Will you commit this summer to get to know Jesus more intimately?

After Jesus' ascension, John experienced **mistreatment** and imprisonment and beatings, because of the Name of Jesus. He did not recant his faith. John heard about his **brother's death** by beheading because of the Name of Christ (Acts 12:1,2) (King Herod Agrippa) ... and he did not give up his faith. Instead, John persevered to the very end of his own long life. John pastored the church of **Ephesus** for two years, remained a pillar of the new church, helped establish some boundaries of the faith, and remained friends with Peter for a long time.

Exiled on the rocky, lonely island of **Patmos**, John, likely in his 90s, was faithfully observing the Lord's day, when he received **The Revelation** of the risen, powerful, awe-inspiring Christ, no longer merely his buddy, but THE conquering authority of heaven and earth. He didn't lean against Jesus or chat then; he fell face-down, trembling, in complete and absolute awe of the faithful Risen Christ.

This is our author and teacher for our study together.

Learn this lesson from John: knowing Jesus costs us. It costs our lives. But the cost of knowing and suffering for Jesus is worth the love, grace, and truth of the gospel.

ABOUT JESUS

How does John describe Jesus? Let's read most of John 1:1-14. Listen for descriptions of Jesus. [Read]

The Word, *Logos* (Greek), is translated as *statement, communication, story, saying, report, message, news*. (Englishman's Concordance)

Jesus is the statement God makes about Himself.

He is the main communication God uses to express His affection and concern for His people.

Jesus is the story of God's heart,

Jesus is saying what God longs to say, reporting to us who God is.

He is the living message of God's love for humanity, and

He is the news that God cares so much that He has entered into the world to save it.

Jesus is God translated into human form, that we may know and hear the heart of God.

Do you want to know what God thinks? Look at Jesus.

Do you want to know what God is like? Look at Jesus.

Do you wonder how He feels about you? Look at Jesus.

Do you wonder about the character of God? Look at Jesus.

Jesus is the expression of God in human form, sinew and bone and skin and blood. This is so radical! God is unfathomable, wild to have thought to do this!

Recently I was in **Ethiopia** speaking to women from a poor area called Suki. They were beautiful, shy, and attentive women and honored me with their attendance. But when I spoke, it didn't matter. They glazed over, would become disinterested, and looked lost - that is, until my faithful, articulate translator began to speak. Then they focused on him, expressed interest, learned in, and engaged. Without my words being translated into Amharic, they meant nothing. If anything, they were frustrating and confusing and drove the women away. But once translated, the words brought life and joy. So it is with Jesus. He has effectively and beautifully translated God's heart to us. Now that we can understand God through Jesus, we can race into His arms, trusting His love, mercy, and holiness.

In John 1:1-14, John writes that Jesus was in the beginning with God, and then John helps us understand Jesus step by step:

In the beginning, Jesus as Creator spoke the elemental basics of light and darkness into being. Jesus in His essence was light, and the light always dispels the darkness. This is true of in the physical realm of life as well as the spiritual realm.

Then John acknowledges that Jesus created the world, but it did not recognize Him. He had laid aside His glory and had become a man, and remained unknown and unacknowledged by the world. The world didn't realize its Creator had dusty feet, was eating its fruit, was walking its roads. World systems didn't recognize that God was at home as a Man.

Jesus was spoken into humanity and became flesh. With skin on, He lived in a neighborhood, in a community, feet on the ground, full of blood, sweat, and tears, living as the son of a carpenter in a humble, obscure, poor family. He had customers who paid their bills late or not at all. He had to practice forgiveness. He suffered, He learned, He needed. He was the firstborn in a large family ... but He didn't forget who His real Father, Almighty God, was.

At the right time, Jesus began His ministry to His own people, the Jews. They did not receive Him, but rather rejected Him. But that was all part of the plan of salvation: Jesus came to open

God's doors to all. **He was full of grace and truth, a perfect combination for saving the world.** **Grace** to cover failure and fractures, sin and selfishness, brutality and inhumanity, apathy and mismanaged passions. **Grace** to restore and renew, to bring hope and wholeness. **Truth** to draw a line, to hold us to a standard, to point to holiness, to humble us, to help us know our own need for a Savior.

Unlock the Scriptures

How do we get to know Jesus? Let's explore what the Bible has to say about Him. In each grouping of verses below, there is a common theme, name, or title about Jesus. As you look up each scripture, jot a few notes as you find what the theme, name, or title is.

WORD

John 1:1-5,14
Revelation 19:13
Hebrews 1:2,3

LAMB

John 1:29
Isaiah 53

LIGHT

John 1:3-5, 7-9

GOD

John 1:1, Colossians 1:17 - pre-existent
John 1:1,2 - Equal with, same as, and separate from
Colossians 1:15,16,19, 20 -

Lock It In

Awe!

Revelation 1

Revelation 22:8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship

An appropriate response for us!

Lock It Down: 11:25-11:27

Take two minutes for journaling, wondering, writing a lesson, or answering a question. Is there anything you want to know more about, or is there a new thought today that has surprised you? What has been the greatest challenge to you?

What has been your favorite description of Jesus today?

Are there any non-essentials you need to leave behind in order to follow Jesus?

Bonus Features: Conversation Starters at the Table or in the Car

A thought or question you can bring up with others in the next few days:

Tell me a story about when you met someone who became a friend.

Describe each person in your family or your apartment, but you can only use metaphors.

To small children, point out as you go through your day everything you see that is good: all of nature was made through Jesus. See how many bugs, insects, plants, and mountain ranges they can name. **For older children**, show them the “Powers of Ten” clip so they can see how vast and intricate creation is. Also consider telling them the story of Passover in the Old Testament, and how Jesus in the New Testament is the Lamb of God who takes away our sin.

Business

How to access the cspc.net website,
the SOS page,
the Pinterest Board (Pinterest—> Suzanne Stelling —> “Highlights of John” board),
and Powers of Ten (YouTube)