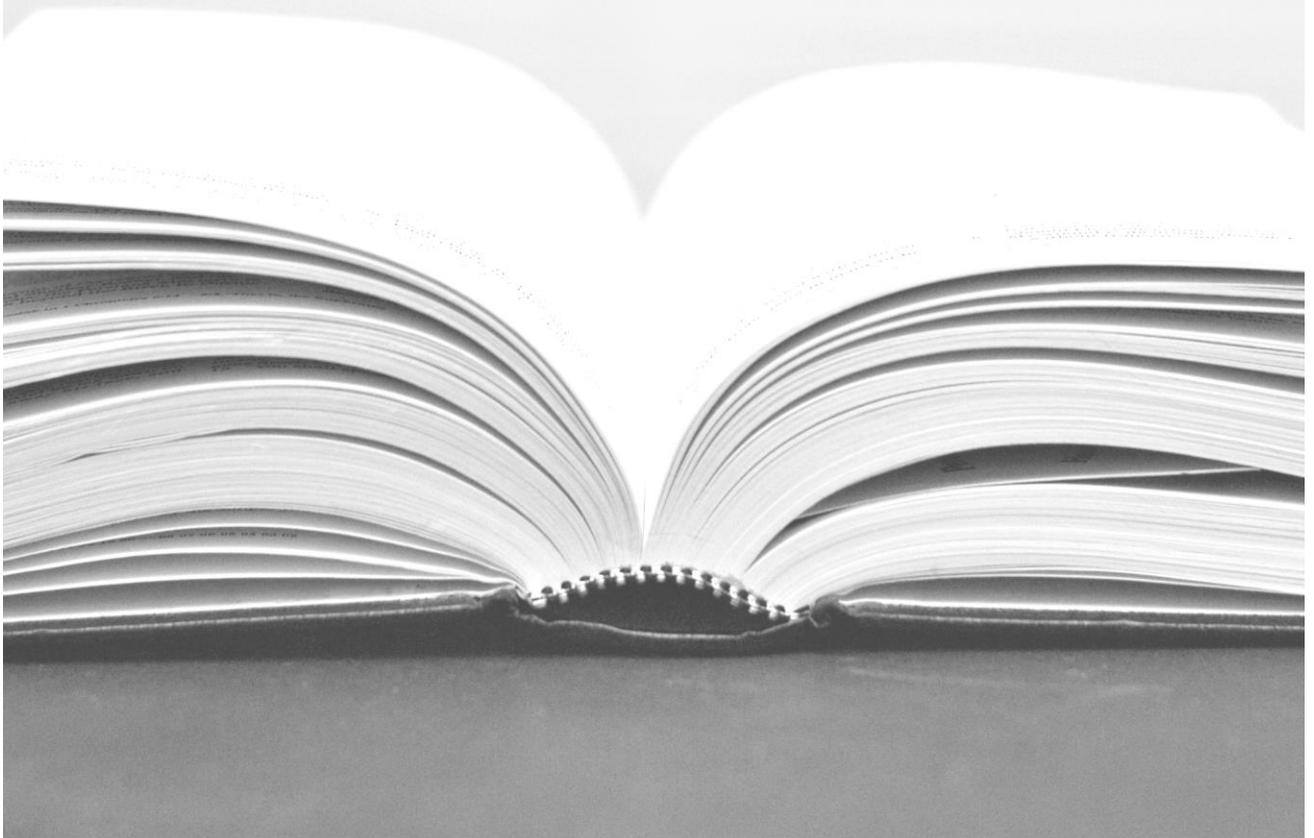


Simply Jesus



Introduction

Simply Jesus is an investigative study of the book of John because it allows you to investigate for yourself the main themes of this book, as well as what it claims for its main character Jesus Christ. You'll investigate, you'll question, and you'll get to learn, simply, about Jesus. But first, here's a little background on the book of John and the Bible itself to assist you in your investigation.

BACKGROUND

The Bible can seem like an intimidating book, so here's an overview of it. The Bible has two basic sections, one called the "Old Testament" and one called the "New Testament."

The Old Testament is made up of 39 books written over the course of a number of centuries. All of these books were written before Jesus lived, but they all point to or prepare for the coming of Jesus. They include history (mainly about the history of Israel), poetry (like the Psalms), and prophecy (books like Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.).

There are 27 books in the New Testament. These books were all written in the first century A.D. by eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and ministry, or by those with access to and the approval of those eyewitnesses. These books tell us about the events surrounding Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, as well as what difference those events can make for our lives today. The first four books of the New Testament are called "gospels". You could think of them as eyewitness biographies of Jesus.

John was one of those eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and ministry – one of his twelve original disciples. The book that we're going to investigate is one of those gospels, so it's often referred to as "the gospel of John" or simply as "the book of John."

FORMAT

To help you investigate the gospel of John, we've designed eight studies that survey the book. They're best done with at least one other person – ideally, someone who can assist you in your investigation. You'll find each of the studies divided into four sections; here's what they cover:

GETTING READY.....

- an ice breaker question to get warmed up
- background information that will help you understand the passage for that particular study

GATHERING INFO...

- questions that help you investigate the passage's meaning and significance

MAKING IT REAL.....

- questions to connect what you learned in the GATHERING INFO section to our lives

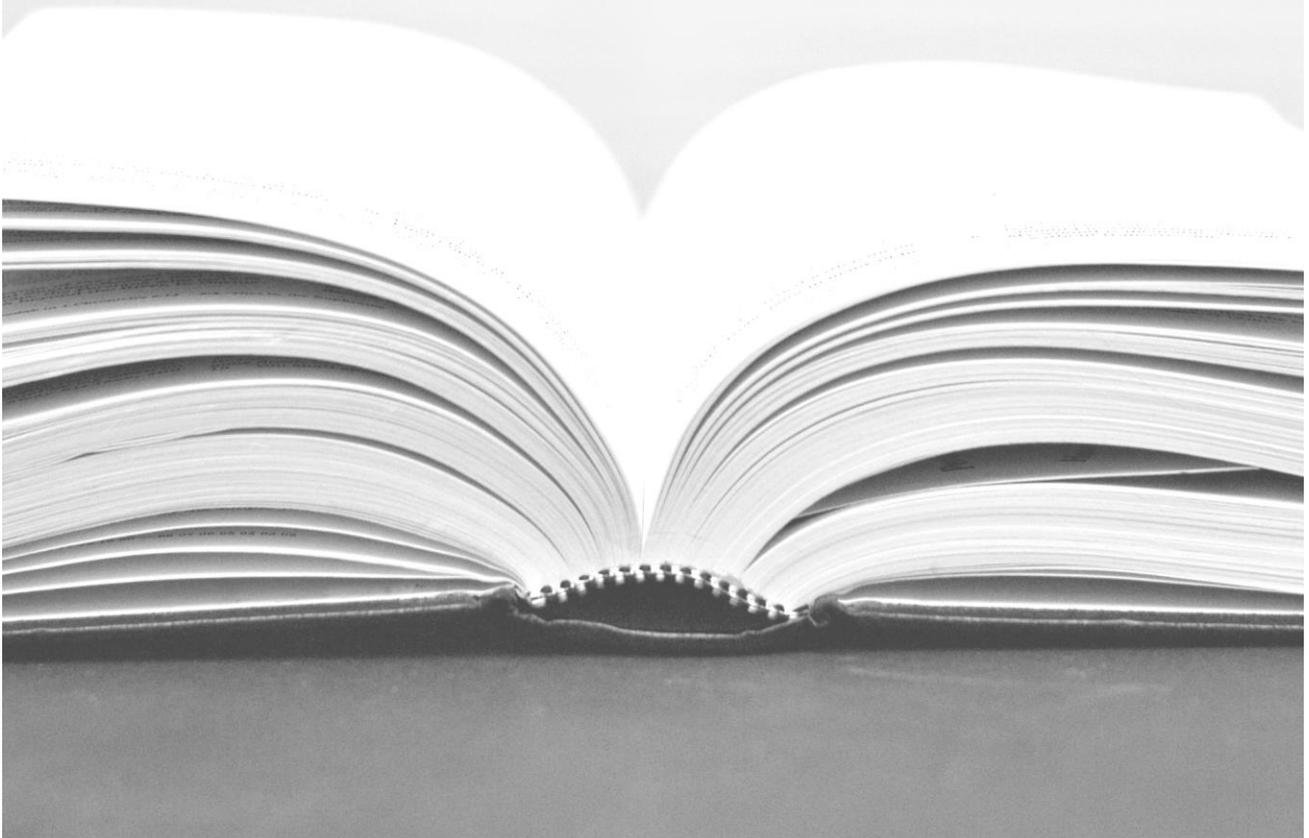
MOVING FORWARD...

- what to read for the next study
- something you might think about, or even pray about

So let the investigation begin as you start *Simply Jesus*!

STUDY 1

What was your name again?



STUDY 1 – What was your name again?

GETTING READY...

- Do you have any funny or interesting stories about being introduced to someone?
- In the section you're about to read, John introduces his book. Like any good introduction, it seeks to acquaint us with the main characters that we will encounter in the story. Clearly from this introduction, the main character is something or someone referred to in vs. 1 as "the Word." For our purposes, notice two things in particular about this Word. First, notice how this Word is described; secondly, notice what this Word is said to do. Those two pieces of information will provide crucial insights into what follows in this book.

Also, another John appears in this section: John the Baptist. Don't be confused with John the author of the book. When you see "John" in this passage it's referring to John the Baptist, who is called that because he was baptizing people as a way of preparing them for this "Word".

- Read John chapter 1, verses 1 through 18.

GATHERING INFO...

1. Consider vs. 1-3, what does John (the author) want us to learn about this Word?

2. Compare vs. 14 with vs. 1-3. What is John (the author) claiming for this Word?

3. Vs. 6 and following introduce a supporting actor, John the Baptist. What does John the Baptist want to clarify about himself and about Jesus?

4. John the Baptist says that Jesus is the "light" who "enlightens" others; what kind of enlightening do you think he had in mind?

5. John (the author) claims that Jesus gives others the “right to become children of God” (vs. 12). Since John must mean more than “we are all born children of God” (see vs. 13), what do you think he means by this statement?

MAKNG IT REAL.....

1. Look back to your answers to questions 1 and 2. Does it surprise you that John makes the claims of vs. 1-3 for Jesus Christ? Why or why not?

2. How is John’s view of Jesus similar to your own? How is John’s view different from your own?

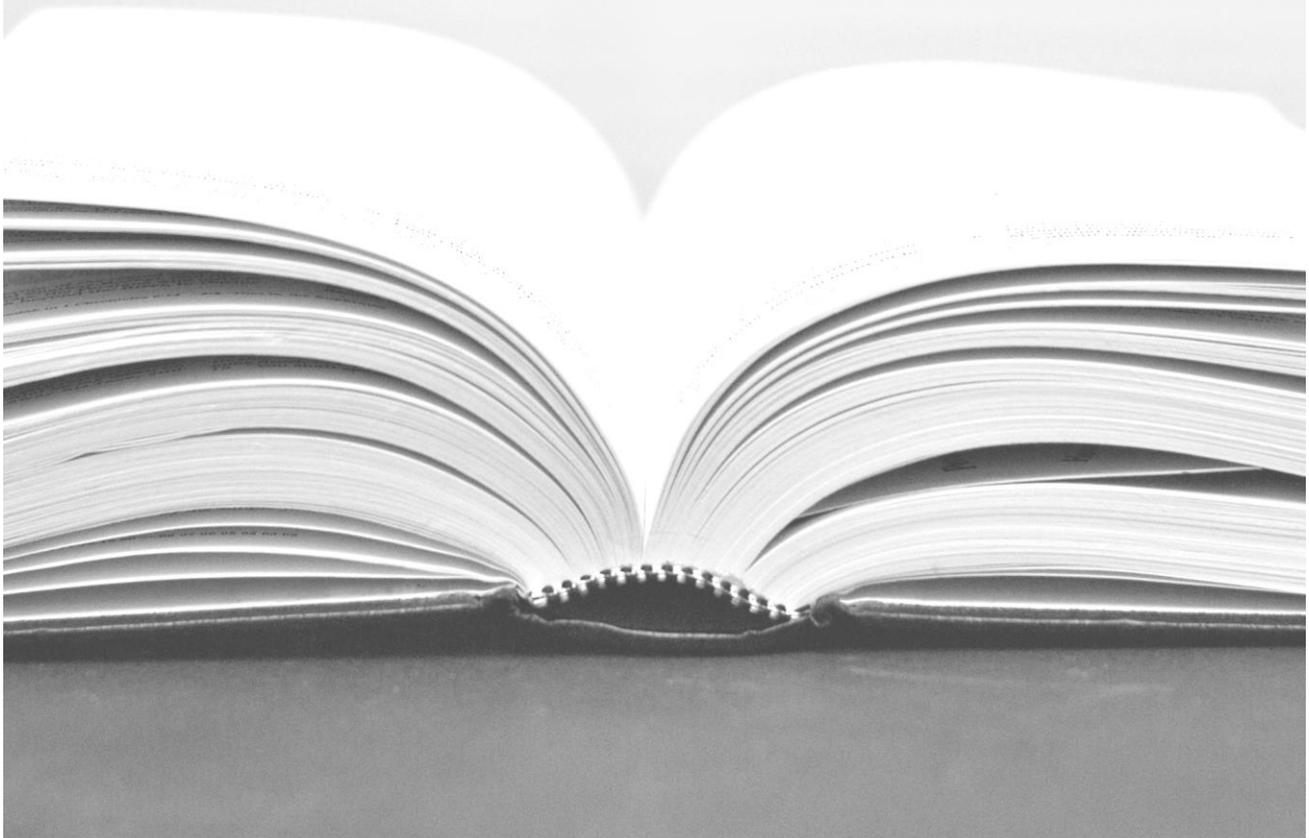
3. Would you say that you need the enlightening that John says Jesus can bring? If so, how? Please explain....

MOVING FORWARD....

- Read John chapter 2 for the next study.
- Prior to the next study, consider taking a step in prayer. Prayer is essentially talking to God, interacting with Him personally. Consider talking to him about something you don’t see or don’t understand about the person of Jesus, and ask for him to enlighten you.

STUDY 2

Who's in charge around here?



STUDY 2 – Who’s in charge around here?

GETTING READY...

- What do you enjoy about weddings? What’s a fun memory you have of being at a wedding?
- In the section you read, John begins to fill in his character sketch of Jesus, and he does so with two very different scenes. First, John takes us to a wedding. Weddings were important events in Jesus’ day and during the celebration, something very embarrassing happened – they ran out of wine. In that moment, John shows us something quite extraordinary about Jesus.

Then John brings us to the temple – the place where the sacrifices were made for sins against God. Because people came from long distances to worship through these sacrifices, they would exchange their currency in order to buy an animal to be sacrificed. In that context, John again shows us something unusual and amazing about Jesus.

- Read John chapter 2, verses 1-22.

GATHERING INFO...

1. When his mother approaches him about the wine running out, Jesus does not seem inclined to intervene. What reason does Jesus give? What do you think he’s referring to?

2. In vs. 9 John tells us what Jesus caused to happen to the water that had been poured. Did you notice what changed? Do you believe this alteration is possible? Why or why not?

3. In vs. 11, John tells us the purpose and result of this miracle claim. What was that purpose and what was the result in the lives of the disciples?

4. In the second scene, Jesus’ concern was not *what* was happening, but *where* – in the temple. Why did Jesus have such strong feelings about that?

5. In vs. 19, John records Jesus making a very significant claim for himself; what is that claim? (Note: the temple was the place of worship – the place to meet with God himself.)

MAKING IT REAL...

1. Taking these two scenes together, what do think John is claiming to be true about Jesus?

2. If Jesus really has such authority over the physical realm, what might that imply for our lives?

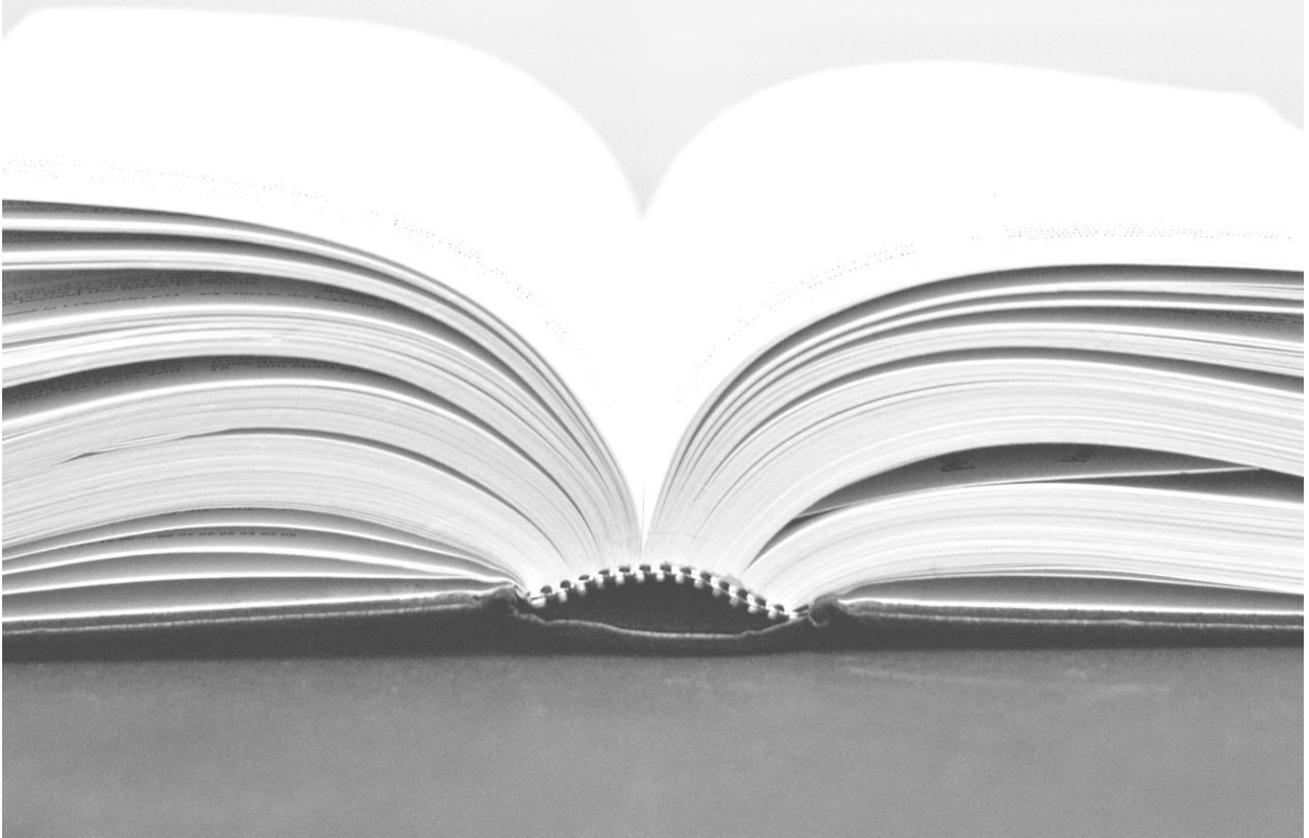
3. If Jesus really has such authority over the spiritual realm, what might that imply for our lives?

MOVING FORWARD...

- For the next study, read John chapter 4, verses 7 – 42.
- Consider talking to God about the implications you noted above.

STUDY 3

Who told you that about me?



STUDY 3 – Who told you that about me?

GETTING READY...

- If there was one person in history that you could meet personally and talk with, who would it be and why?
- In the section you read, John takes us to a place called Samaria. The Samaritans were descendants of both Jewish and non-Jewish people. As a result, most fully-Jewish people rejected them (notice vs. 9 in this reading, for instance). In turn, the Samaritans rejected a fully-Jewish religion. They accepted only a portion of the Hebrew Scriptures, and they set up their own place of worship.

In light of these racial and religious tensions, Jesus does a very radical thing: he speaks to and personally interacts with a Samaritan woman. Much could be said about how Jesus very intentionally crosses racial, religious, and even traditional gender boundaries, but the most important thing to see in this study is how Jesus addresses this issue of worship. As you review, notice what Jesus explicitly claims for himself in that regard.

- Review John chapter 4, verses 7 – 42.

GATHERING INFO...

1. In vs. 10, Jesus makes an unusual statement about providing “living water” – what do you think he means by this? (Refer to vs. 13-14 as well.)

2. What does Jesus promise for the water that he can provide?

3. Jesus moves the discussion forward by mentioning the woman’s husband. What does he say and why do you think he did this?

4. The woman quickly changes the subject to the local worship controversy (vs. 19). What does Jesus say about the nature of true worship?

5. Jesus roots his thoughts about the nature of “true worship” in the nature of God. What does he say that God is like? What do you think this means?

MAKING IT REAL...

1. Jesus does not refer to a physical thirst but a spiritual one; what kind of spiritual thirst do you think he means? Are you aware of a spiritual thirst in your own life? If so, how?

2. Jesus knows all about this woman’s past; what does that imply that he knows about us? How does that affect you?

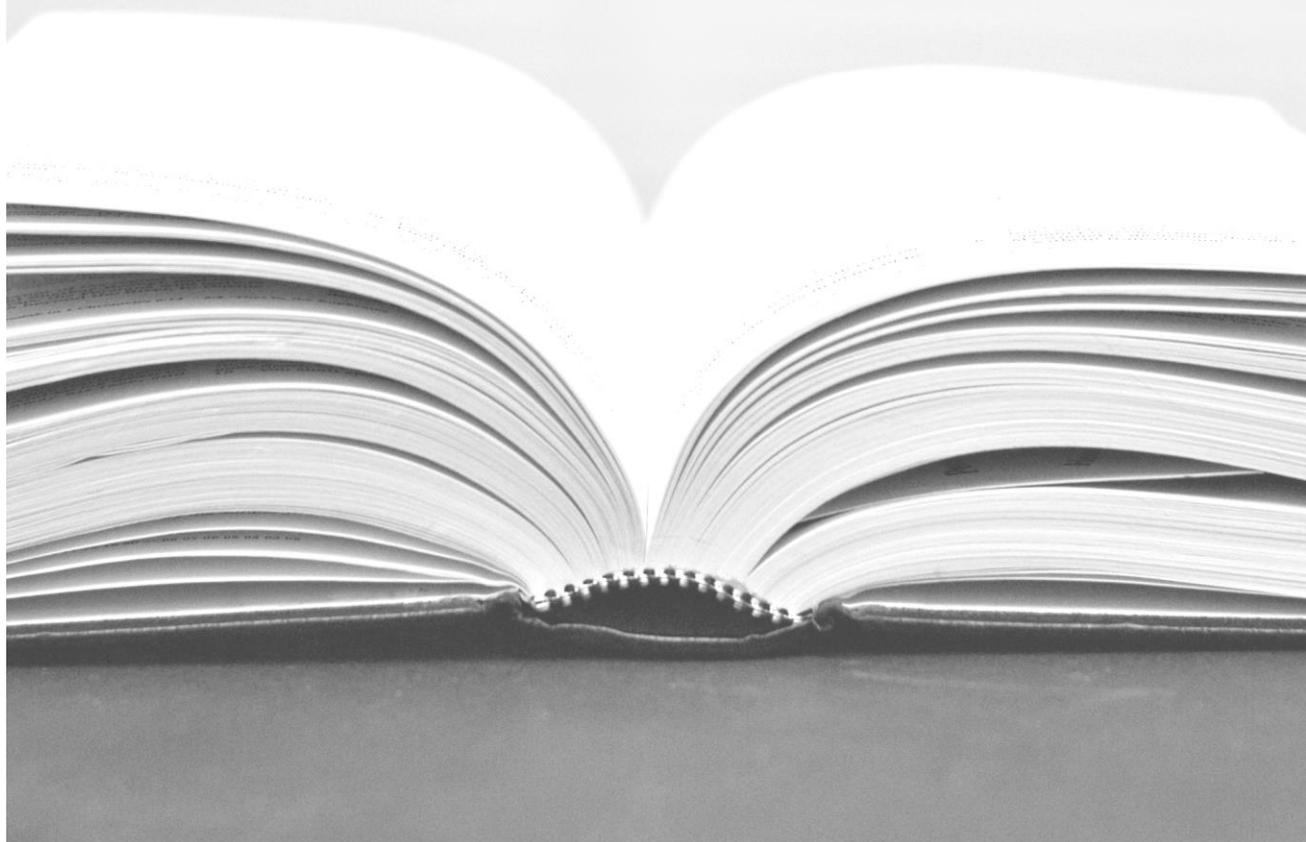
3. Although Jesus knew all about the woman’s past, he invites her into a worship relationship with God. What does this tell about Jesus and what he came to accomplish?

MOVING FORWARD...

- Read John chapter 5, verses 1 - 29 for the next study.
- Consider talking to God about the genuine worship-relationship that comes through believing in Jesus.

STUDY 4

Do you make house calls?



STUDY 4 – Do you make house calls?

GETTING READY...

- What is the worst sickness you've experienced? What did you think or feel when you finally felt better?
- In this reading, John shows Jesus going to a pool where, according to tradition, angels would periodically stir the waters. The tradition (believed by many, as you can see in this passage) said that after the angels stirred the pool, the first person to reach the waters would be physically healed (see vs. 7). When Jesus heals a man in that area, it leads to a confrontation with the religious authorities about the Sabbath. The Sabbath was the day of rest mandated by Old Testament law for the good of God's people, but this good thing had been distorted. When you read, notice how the day of rest had been made burdensome.

During this controversy about the Sabbath, John shows Jesus making some very important statements about himself and his Father. Read Jesus' statements over carefully; you might even want to read them a couple of times. They're profound declarations that get us even closer to the heart of what John wants us to see about Jesus Christ.

- Review John chapter 5, verses 1 – 29.

GATHERING INFO...

1. In vs. 8-9, Jesus instantaneously heals this man. What does this action tell us about Jesus?

2. As extremely difficult as debilitating conditions are, Jesus implies in vs. 14 that something could be worse; what do you think he means?

3. The controversy about Jesus healing on the Sabbath leads to a statement Jesus makes in vs. 17; what do you think he means by this? What did the religious authorities conclude he meant?

4. In the paragraph beginning with vs. 19, Jesus describes his relationship with God, his Father. What are the things that he claims the Father would do for him, the “Son” – and why?

5. Capture in your own words the meaning of vs. 24. What does that signify that John wants us to understand about Jesus?

MAKING IT REAL...

1. What do you think about the idea (in question 2 above) that something could be worse than a serious physical ailment? Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not?

2. What promise does Jesus seem to hold out to us in this passage? In other words, what solution does he seem to offer for our dilemma?

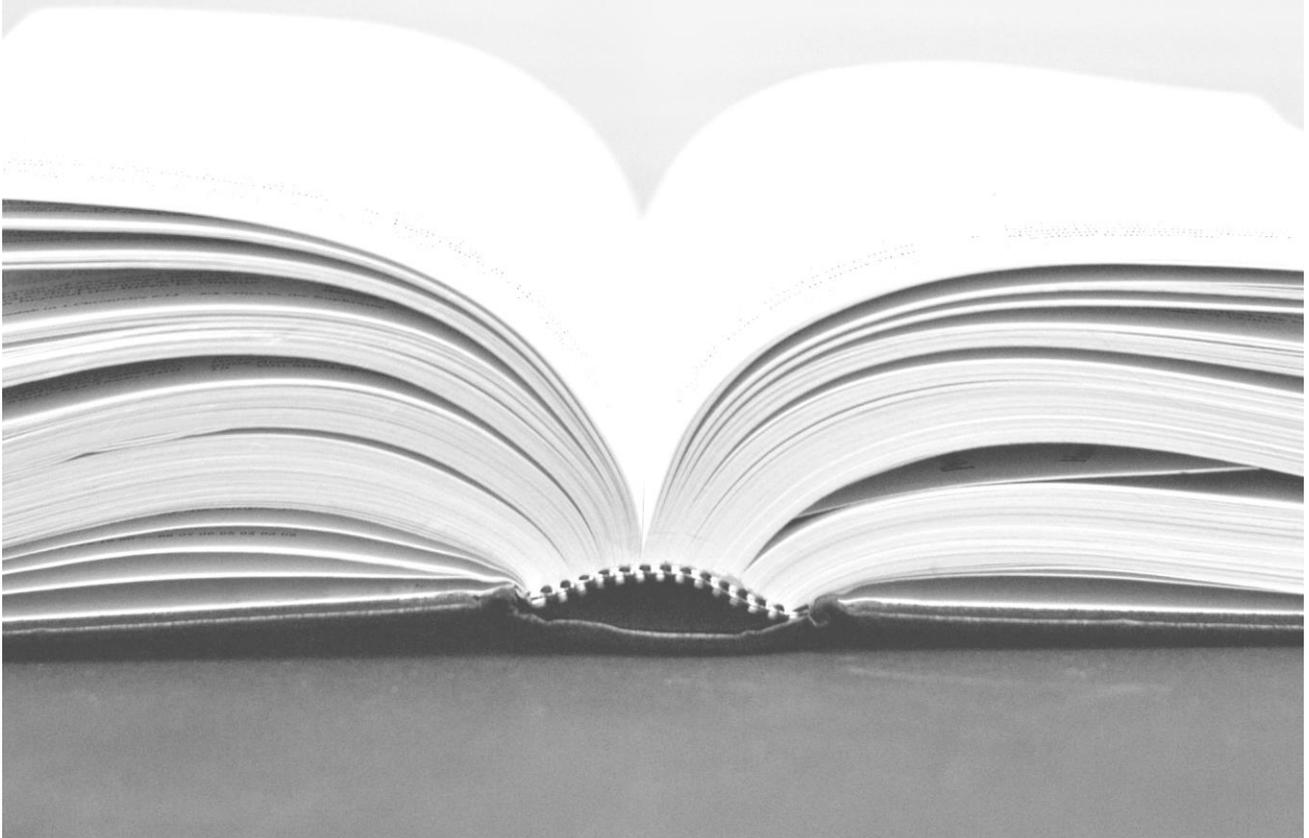
3. Considering question 5 above, does it surprise you that “whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him”? What does this statement imply for our lives?

MOVING FORWARD...

- Read John chapter 6, verses 1 - 40 for the next study.
- Consider the response to Jesus that John highlights and whether you have believed in Jesus.

STUDY 5

Do you cater as well?



STUDY 5 – Do you cater as well?

GETTING READY...

- What is your favorite restaurant? What do you like to order when you go there and why?
- John now takes us to the scene of two of Jesus' most famous miracles – his feeding of 5,000 people and his walking on water. Miracles are events that occur outside of the natural workings of our world, and for that reason we tend to view them skeptically. But read these famous accounts bearing in mind that if a personal God really did create our vast universe, then certainly he could work outside of the natural laws he put in place. Consider further what these events tell you about Jesus Christ.

After the accounts of those famous miracles, we read of a rather famous teaching account – that of Jesus calling himself “the bread of life.” In a day when food was not plentiful and the vast majority of the population lived at subsistence level, consider how powerfully this metaphor would have spoken to the original hearers. But even more importantly, consider what Jesus seeks to communicate about himself through this metaphor.

- Review John chapter 6, verses 1 – 40.

GATHERING INFO...

1. In vs. 14, the crowds conclude that Jesus is “the Prophet” (a figure predicted centuries before by Moses), but Jesus withdraws; why do think he does so?

2. What does the account of Jesus walking on the water communicate to us about Jesus Christ and why do you think the disciples were frightened in response?

3. As Jesus discerns that the crowds follow him to get physical sustenance, what does he tell them to seek? What do you think he means by this?

4. The crowds wonder what works they must do to have this sustenance (vs. 28). What work does Jesus call them to do instead?

5. When Jesus uses the metaphor of bread to describe himself (vs. 35), what kind of hunger does he claim to satisfy? How does he tell us we can receive this bread?

MAKING IT REAL...

1. In response to the crowds, Jesus highlights only one necessary “work” for receiving what he provides; does this surprise you? What are some ways we try to offer a different work to God?

2. Why does Jesus view any other “work” as insufficient to receive anything from God? Do you agree with his view? Why or why not?

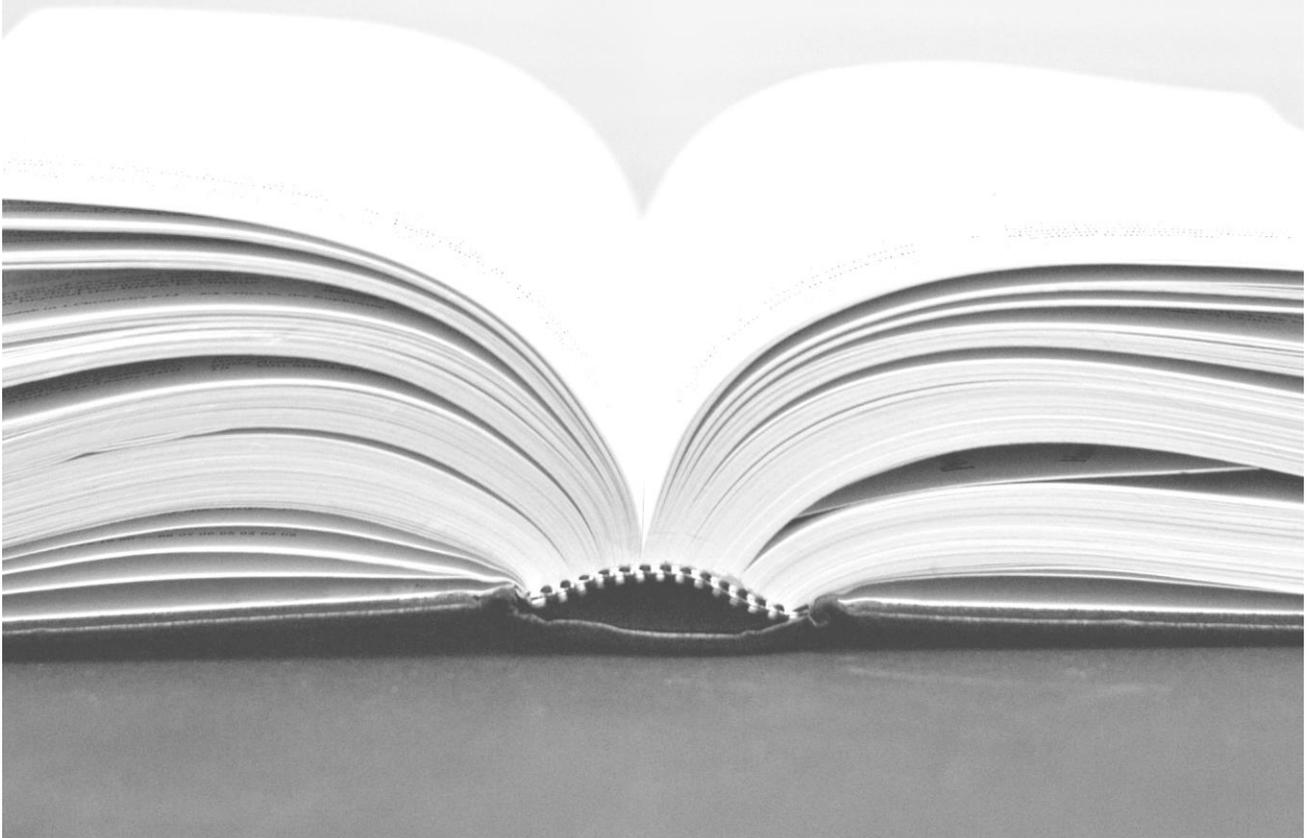
3. In vs. 37, Jesus holds out a very encouraging promise; please paraphrase it in your own words. How could that promise affect how we think about God?

MOVING FORWARD...

- Read John chapter 8, verses 12 - 47 for the next study.
- Consider what “works” you tend to rely on before God; how should you change your view of them now?

STUDY 6

Who's your daddy?



STUDY 6 – Who’s your daddy?

GETTING READY...

- What is your favorite memory from your childhood? What is the best quality you gleaned from your parents?
- John now recounts a great deal of dialogue between Jesus and some of the religious authorities of his day. You’ll want to notice the rising hostility against Jesus at this point. You’ll also find some words that are probably very familiar when Jesus says, “The truth will set you free”. The context of that statement provides the central focus of our study, and it is crucial to understanding the purpose behind Jesus’ coming. Notice that context and consider the importance of Jesus’ saying for your own life.

Also note that here we find the first mention of the devil in the passages we’ve studied. The Bible describes the devil as a very powerful and wholly evil spiritual being. He was present with the first humans, tempting them to rebel against God. That’s part of the background when Jesus calls the religious leaders children of “the father of lies.”

- Review John chapter 8, verses 12 – 47.

GATHERING INFO...

1. In vs. 21, Jesus tells these religious leaders, “You will die in your sin.” Jesus seems to imply something other than physical death; what do you think he means

2. In vs. 24, Jesus adds a caveat to his statement in vs. 21; what is it? What exactly do you think they need to believe about him?

3. In vs. 31, Jesus utters the well-known words that “the truth will set you free.” What reason does he go on to give for our need to be set free? In what way do we become slaves of sin?

4. What “truth” does it seem like Jesus refers to when he says it will set us free? In what way might that truth possibly set us free?

5. The religious authorities claim to oppose Jesus because they are “Abraham’s children,” but Jesus offers another view of their hostility. What is it?

MAKING IT REAL....

1. In question 1, we saw that Jesus implies that we are liable to experience a death that is other than merely physical. Do you think this statement should concern us? Why or why not?

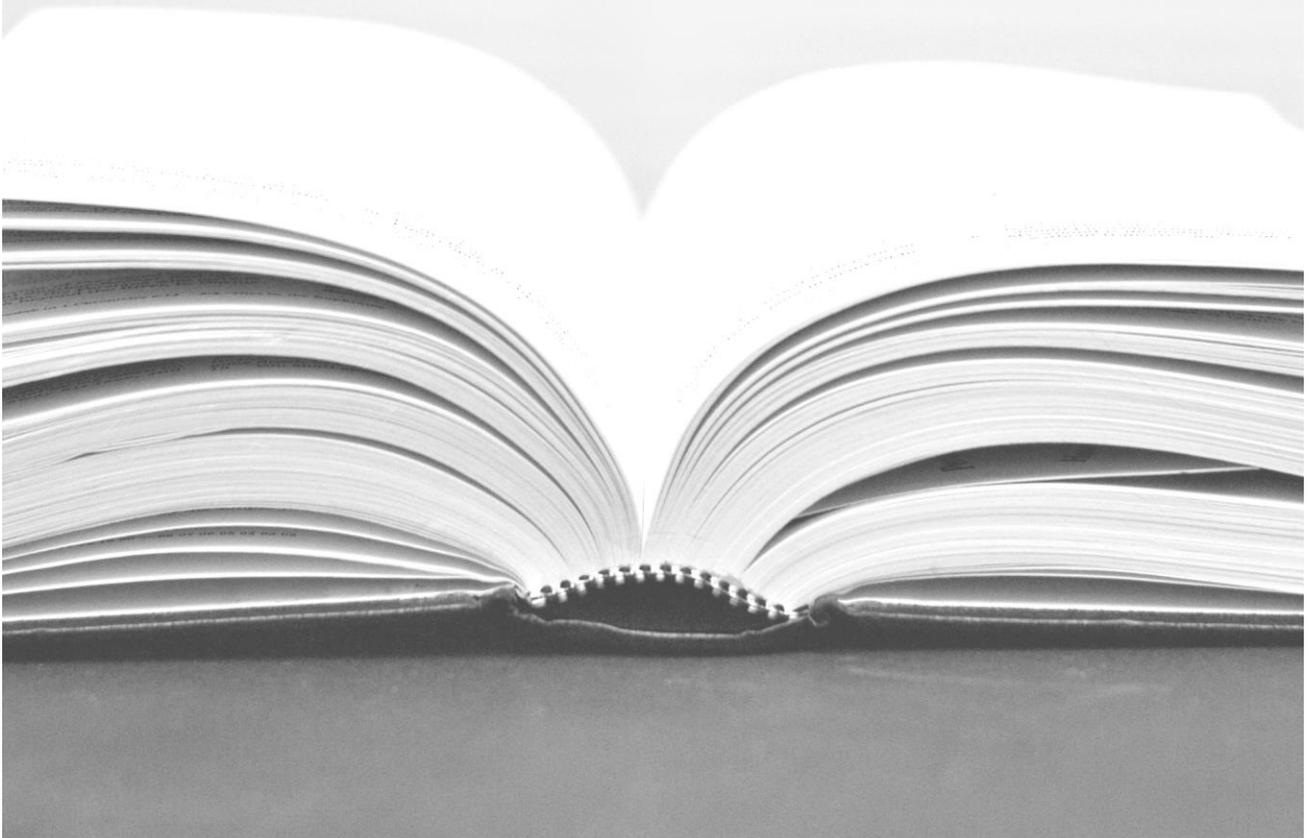
2. In question 2, we discovered an absolute claim Jesus makes for himself. What do you think about this claim?

3. How did your answers to questions 3 and 4 affect how you think of our sin? Do you believe you have a need for freedom from sin? How might that freedom come into our lives?

MOVING FORWARD...

- Read John chapter 19, verses 1 - 42 for the next study.
- Consider Jesus’ view of our sin and its seriousness, and talk to God about how that pertains to your own life.

STUDY 7
How could this happen?



STUDY 7 – How could this happen?

GETTING READY....

- What's the most loving thing someone has done for you?
- In the chapters between our last and current readings, the hostility against Jesus has only intensified. It finally came to a head as the religious authorities had Jesus arrested on trumped up charges of sedition and blasphemy. He has since been turned over to the Roman official in charge of the region, Pontius Pilate. Pilate was not interested in the religious charges of blasphemy, nor was he particularly concerned about the charge of sedition against Rome. Pilate's main concern was to maintain the fragile peace that existed in this volatile region.

After his arrest, Jesus is flogged (cruelly whipped with leather embedded with bits of bone and metal) and then dies by crucifixion. This account has all the makings of a horrendous miscarriage of justice, but it also has overtones of being ordained by God. Note those overtones as you read, and consider why this happened.

- Review chapter 19, verses 1 through 42.

GATHERING INFO....

1. Notice Pilate's conclusion about Jesus' guilt; what does he say? What does this statement reveal about the proceedings of Jesus' arrest and trial to this point?

2. How would you describe Jesus' conduct during his execution? Does it surprise you?

3. To better understand this scene, please read John chapter 3, verses 16 through 21. Vs. 16 is very important for understanding Jesus' death. What light does this verse shed on Jesus' crucifixion?

4. Still in John 3, look down to vs. 36. How can God be both loving (vs. 16) and wrathful or holy (vs. 36)? How are both of these attributes important for understanding the cross of Jesus?

5. Returning to chapter 19, what do you think Jesus means in vs. 30 when he says, "It is finished"? What might possibly be finished?

MAKING IT REAL...

1. Part of this account revolves around Jesus being mocked as a "king." Do you think Jesus is a true king? If so, what kind of king do you think he came to be?

2. If God Himself caused the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (see question 4 above), what does that tell us about God? What does that tell us about our condition before God, left to ourselves?

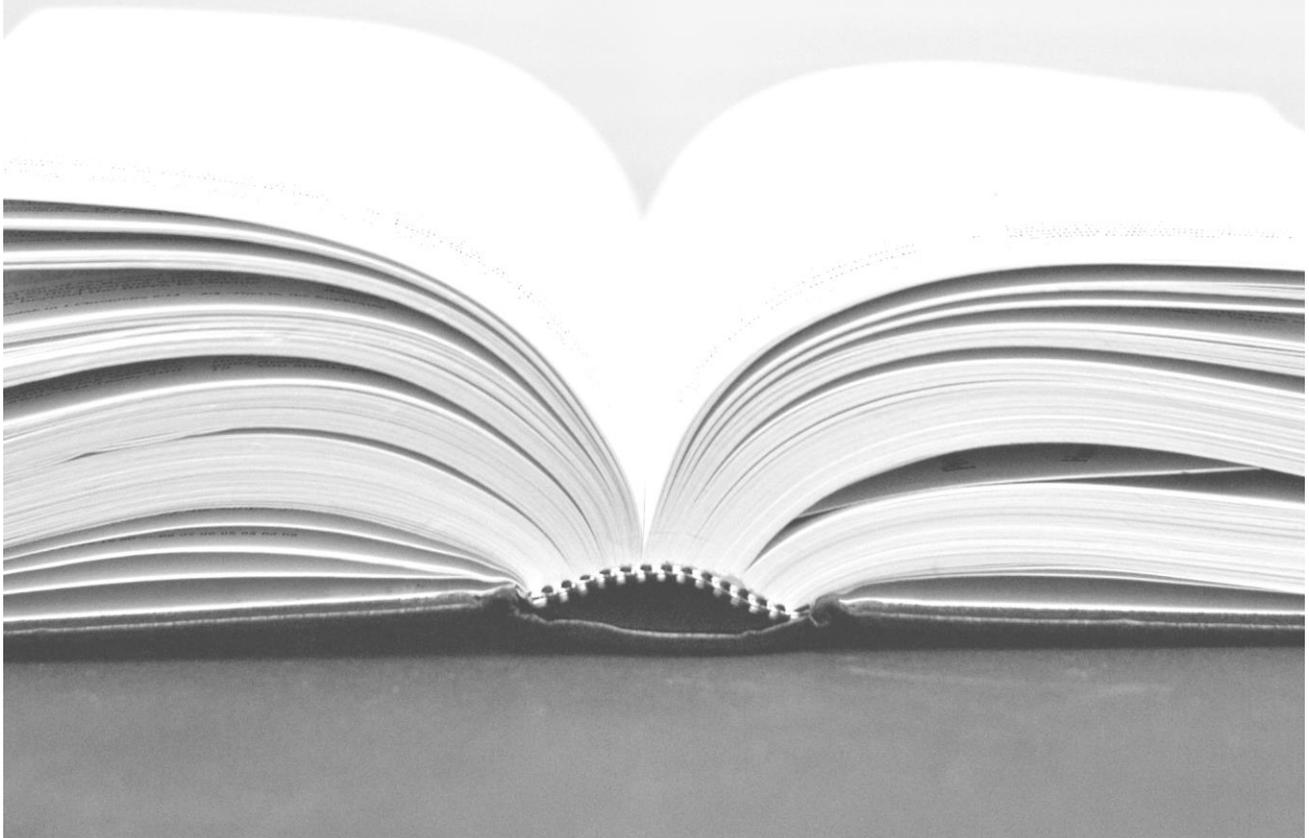
3. In vs. 30, Jesus obviously completed what he came to do. How do you think this can or should relate to our lives? How will you respond to Jesus' finished work?

MOVING FORWARD...

- Read John chapter 20, verses 1 - 31 for the next study.
- Ask God to show you how significant the cross of Jesus ought to be for our lives and how you should respond to it.

STUDY 8

He did what?



STUDY 8 – He did what?

GETTING READY...

- What was a time in your life when a great disappointment surprisingly turned into a great joy?
- We come now the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. John claims in this chapter that Jesus, having been executed on a Roman cross, rose bodily and physically from the dead. The disciples were clearly surprised, even skeptical, at first. But later each would spend his life declaring that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. No one gives his life for what he knows is a lie. The disciples' testimony is compelling evidence that this amazing event really happened.

We've seen Jesus say that we are liable for death because of our sin, we've seen him point out the seriousness of our sin before God, and we've seen him give his life to complete the payment for our sin. As you read this account, consider the implications of Jesus' resurrection.

- Review John chapter 20, verses 1 through 31.

GATHERING INFO...

1. When Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb, what is her conclusion about what has happened? Why do you think she concluded this?

2. How does Jesus want to reassure the disciples in vs. 20? Why was that important?

3. How does Thomas respond to Jesus in vs. 28? Why did he respond this way? How does Jesus respond in turn?

4. What does Jesus say will be true of those who believe, but haven't seen? In what ways would this be true?

5. We saw above that Jesus wants to emphatically show that he has physically risen from the dead; what does Jesus' physical resurrection tell us about our own life and death?

MAKING IT REAL....

1. In John chapter 14, verse 6 Jesus said that he is "the way, the truth and the life." He added that "no one comes to the Father except through me." In light of Jesus' resurrection, why does this statement make so much sense? What are the implications of this for your own life?

2. Jesus seems to expect that others who have not seen him personally will believe in him. Do you personally believe that he rose from the dead and lives today? Why or why not?

3. In this chapter, the expected response to Jesus is belief. That involves a response of our entire being, including turning from what we know is wrong and turning to Jesus Christ. In light of what we've seen, do you think Jesus is worthy of such a response? Why or why not?

Simply Jesus

If you'd like more information about Jesus, or would like to stop by our church, just visit our website:

www.gracechurcheast.org

We'd be glad to help you in any way we can!

