

Love Letters

Reading Through the Gospels



Reading Guide
Week #13

John 5-10



NEW HORIZON
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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A Week in Review. Last week we concluded Luke and began the Gospel of John. Here we find new stories and many familiar stories in a different order. We'll also notice that, instead of simply telling the stories of Jesus' life, John offers theological interpretation along the way. In John's unique writing style, Jesus has been having long conversations with individuals rather than preaching to the masses. John's message so far is clear: Jesus and the Father are One.

This Week's Reading. Jesus continues to offer "signs" (John's word for miracles): healings, feeding the masses, walking on water, and more. There will be seven in all. These are Jesus' way of identifying Himself as the Messiah and calling people to believe. John offers us a challenging perspective: perhaps God's mighty acts are for the purpose of provoking our faith rather than simply meeting our needs.

○ MONDAY—JOHN 5

Consider. Chapter 4 is a story of a Samaritan woman who believed, and a community that believed because of her testimony. In today's reading, we find those who *don't* believe, even when given much evidence. What evidence supports your faith—either faith in Christ or otherwise? Is it adequate for your conclusion?

Read.

- Did the crippled man believe? In Chapter 4, a royal official acted in faith: "*The man took Jesus at His Word...*" (v.50.) But the crippled man in today's reading shows no evidence of faith. In v.7 he says to Jesus "*Sir...I have no one to help me,*" and in v. 15 the man even rats out Jesus to the Jews. Unfortunately, Jesus' signs don't always lead to faith (Kyzar, p.34). Why do you suppose some you know are able to believe, while others are not?
- "*My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working*" (v.17). Our God is an active God, and Jesus tells us God is always involved in our lives. Are you able to recognize God's work throughout your life?

Reflect. Jesus speaks of "eternal life" throughout John. But it's not simply living forever; eternal life has already begun for believers: "*Whoever hears My Word and believes ... has crossed over from death to life*" (v.24) Eternal is a *quality* of life lived in relationship with God now and forever. How do you sense this "eternal" dimension in your daily life?

○ TUESDAY—JOHN 6

Consider. Kyzar (p.40-41) finds "Moses imagery" in this chapter. A) Jesus ascends a mountain (v.3) just as Moses ascended Sinai. B) John mentions the Passover Feast (v.4), the celebration Moses enacted. C) Jesus feeds the multitudes (v.11) just as Moses called for manna in the wilderness. D) Jesus overcomes the raging sea (v.21) just as Moses parted the Red Sea. E) Finally, the crowd "grumbles" (v.41) just as the Israelites grumbled about Moses. Jesus is the completion of the salvation Moses began. What does God continue to work on in your life?

Read.

- Jesus helps us understand the radical nature of following Jesus: "*Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you*" (v.53). Jesus isn't speaking of Communion (Communion isn't mentioned in John.) Disciples of Jesus are sustained only as they "feed on" (v.57) their Savior through radical faith and obedience. In what ways do you "feed on" Jesus?
- "*No one can come to Me unless the Father has enabled him*" (v.64). Jesus teaches we are so far from God that we can only find God if God helps us. Do you ever ask God to help you see and know Him?

Reflect. The high calling of Jesus is a "hard teaching" (v.60). As such, "*many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him*" (v.66). What challenges does following Christ bring to your life? When are you tempted to turn away?

○ WEDNESDAY—JOHN 7

Consider. In v. 5 we learn that "*even Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him.*" Yet months later, in the Book of Acts, Jesus' brother James becomes the leader of the church in Jerusalem

(Acts 15:13). Who do you know who has gone from doubt to faith and beyond? Is it you?

Read.

- Jesus makes a conditional statement in v.17: "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God." In other words, as we are obedient, the truths of Christ are affirmed in our heart. When have you experienced this truth?
- It seems the Jews didn't check the facts: "How can the Christ come from Galilee? The Scripture says Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem?" (v.42). Do you know folk who have made up their minds about Christ without knowing about Christ? How are you growing in your knowledge of Scripture so you can help them understand?

Reflect. John interprets for us in v.39. In His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus would be "glorified," permitting the Spirit to be "received" by those who "believe." The Spirit is then a "stream of Living Water" (v.38) flowing through believers. When have you experienced this "stream" flowing through you to others?

○ **THURSDAY—JOHN 8**

Consider. Where does chapter 8 actually begin? Your Bible might notate that 7:53 – 8:11 doesn't appear in some manuscripts. Yet this story is so well known to many. Some scholars suggest: *The fact that the early church permitted these verses remain is a testimony to their validity.* How does this conundrum shape your view of Scripture?

Read.

- Jesus claims to be the *Bread of Life* and *Living Water*. Today He is the *Light of the World* (v.12). He shares truth through experiential metaphors. Can you relate to Christ "satisfying" and "enlightening" you?
- In this chapter we find arguments over ancestry. The crowds ask, "Where is your father?" (v.19). Then they claim, "Abraham is our father" (v.39). But Jesus says, "You belong to your father, the devil" (v.44). They misunderstand Jesus' origin and their own. Jesus' message is clear: God becomes our Heavenly Father as we are born into His

family by faith in Christ. What has been your experience of becoming God's child?

Reflect. As Jesus offers "signs," one will stand out beyond the others: "When you have lifted up (crucified) the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the One" (v.28). They will know Him as they crucify Him. Does the death of Christ on our behalf help you recognize God's love for you?

○ **FRIDAY—JOHN 9**

Consider. Are you able to see? Yesterday, Jesus says He's "the light of the world," and without His light we "walk in darkness" (8:12). Today, Jesus will heal or "enlighten" the eyes of a man born blind (v.7). At the close of the chapter, Jesus describes unbelief as "blindness" (v.41). John is illustrating the challenge of spiritual blindness. How has Jesus opened your spiritual eyes? What spiritual matters are you able to "see" today that you couldn't see before?

Read.

- The disciples want to know whose sin is responsible for the man's blindness (v.2). Jesus says the man was born blind so God's work could be demonstrated in the man's life (v.3). Are you willing to endure struggles so God's power can be displayed in your life?
- Notice the progression of the blind man's faith: First, he calls Jesus "a man" (v.11); then "a prophet" (v.17); then a man "from God" (v.33); and finally "Lord" (v.38). The man's faith is growing as he recognizes God's work in his life. In what ways is Jesus more real for you today than when you first believed? How is your faith growing today?

Reflect. It takes guts to confess and follow Jesus. The testimony of the healed blind man was counter-cultural, and got him "thrown out" (v.34). His parents, on the other hand, were unwilling to pay the price and passed the buck (v.22). In the end, the man stood alone with Jesus. In what ways have you sacrificed your reputation for your faith in Christ? Do you sense God's nearness as you do so?

○ **SATURDAY—JOHN 10**

Consider. Over fifty parables are found in the Synoptic Gospels. *None* are found in John. Instead, we find Jesus using metaphors and allegories, as in today's reading about sheep and shepherds. While parables communicate meaning through stories, Jesus also illustrates spiritual truths by drawing comparisons to everyday life. Why is it necessary for Jesus to use either?

Read.

- Jesus switches up His sheep metaphors as He speaks. First, He is the Shepherd, (v.2,14) calling to His sheep (v.4). Then, He becomes the Gate through which His sheep enter, exit, and find pasture (v. 7, 9). Thankfully, the Shepherd and Gate protect the sheep from a ruthless enemy who "steals, kills and destroys" (v.10). When has Christ been your Shepherd? Your Gate?
- Notice how intentionally Jesus offers His life: "I lay down My life...No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (v.17, 18). Jesus is committed—He is more concerned with our welfare than His own. Are you able to sense and receive His love? In what ways might you reciprocate?

Reflect. Jesus is intent that people believe. "Even though you do not believe Me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (v.38). If you can't believe because of His words, at least believe because of His works. Whatever it takes, please believe! Jesus has given us much opportunity to believe. Are you able?

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