

Love Letters

Reading Through the Gospels



Reading Guide
Week #14

John 11-16



NEW HORIZON
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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A Week in Review. Life, Light, Living Water, Bread of Life—Jesus likens Himself to these human longings and necessities. Feeding five thousand, walking on water, healing the blind—Jesus gives sign after sign to validate His claim of being God’s Son. John presents Jesus as One Who has come to attend to the critical needs of critically needy people. Are you able to see the loving mercy of God in John’s portrayal? Are you able to see yourself as one in need of what only God can provide? How are you receiving God’s grace on a daily basis?

This Week’s Reading. This week we will watch Jesus narrow His contacts, and minister intently and directly to His followers. His ministry is drawing to a close. He is preparing His disciples to endure during His interrogation and death, and to continue in His teachings and example after His resurrection. As you read, are you able to see yourself as Christ’s disciple, learning, receiving, being loved?

○ MONDAY—JOHN 11

Consider. Today Jesus performs His final sign. Amazingly, He will raise a man from the dead four days after the man was buried. Yet, as glorious as this sign is, it will be the final straw, and Jewish leaders will begin plotting His death. Consider the paradox: As this sign reveals God’s incredible glory, it also reveals the depth of human depravity (Kysar, p.55). What do you see in your heart in the presence of Jesus?

Read.

- Both sisters, Mary and Martha, make the same statement: “*Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died*” (v.21,32). Notice their confessions of faith, but perhaps hints of accusation—“*Jesus, You could have prevented this!*” When are you tempted to accuse God by holding Him responsible for difficulties?
- “*I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies. Do you believe this?*” (v.25-26). Although death is inevitable, Jesus claims to be

greater. How does this promise affect your view of death, your own and others’?

Reflect. Consider the hope and encouragement in v.40: “*Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?*” Regardless the outcome of a situation, as we place our faith and confidence in Christ, we will see God’s glory. What have been your experiences of this truth?

○ TUESDAY—JOHN 12

Consider. Today’s story begins in Bethany with a celebration in Jesus’ honor. His hosts, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, have much to celebrate—Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead! Consider the mighty and loving acts of God in your own life. How do you remind yourself to celebrate the goodness and blessings from your God?

Read.

- John reveals something about himself and the other disciples: “*Only after Jesus was glorified (resurrected) did they realize that these things had been written about Him*” (v.16). Understanding came with time. What do you understand about Jesus better today than last year? Last month? Last week?
- V.43 illustrates a dangerous temptation for all: “*They loved praise from men more than praise from God.*” The Jewish leaders who believed in Jesus kept their faith secret. Their reputation was more important than their relationship with God. At what times are you tempted in this way?

Reflect. God consistently and selflessly acts on our behalf. Notice—as Jesus is grieving His impending death, they hear a Voice from heaven. Yet Jesus says, “*This Voice was for your benefit, not Mine*” (v.30). Even as Jesus suffered, God acted on behalf of others. Who in your life has done the same for you?

○ WEDNESDAY—JOHN 13

Consider. The end of Jesus’ earthly life is near. He knows He will soon suffer a grievous death. But, He is also anticipating reunion with His Father: “*Jesus knew that...He had come from God and was returning to God*” (v.3). Have you ever considered the emotional price the Father and

Son paid by being separated on our behalf, or the joy that awaited Them at Their reunion?

Read.

- The Lord's Supper is missing in John. In its place Jesus washes the feet of His disciples (vv.1-17). The bread and cup have been replaced by the basin and towel. In following Christ, we follow His example of serving others. How have you been served by Christ followers? How are you serving others?
- Chapter 13 contains two dramatic twists. First, Jesus washes Judas' feet, then Judas betrays Him. Next, Jesus calls us to love as He loved, then Peter denies Him. Again John contrasts the unconditional love of God with our frailty. When have you experienced God's gracious love when you least deserved it?

Reflect. When Jesus begins to wash Peter's feet, Peter politely declines. Jesus' answer is pointed: "*Unless I wash you, you have no part with me*" (v.8). We receive and walk with Jesus on His terms, not ours. What aspects of your life demonstrate your submission to Jesus? What aspects suggest your unwillingness to do so?

○ **THURSDAY—JOHN 14**

Consider. Today we begin a powerful and unique section of John. For the next four chapters, Jesus offers His disciples parting words, instruction and encouragement. He is preparing them to face the coming events and beyond with faith rather than fear. We are seeing a coaching session for the very first church leaders. How does it make you feel to be recipients of all Christ entrusted to them?

Read.

- Jesus' final message is clear: He is going to the Father to prepare a place for His followers (v.2), then will return to receive believers (v.3). His purpose? "*I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am*" (v.3b). The desire of Jesus' heart is that we be with Him and His Father forever. Are you as eager to be with Jesus as He is to be with you?
- John 14:6 is a poignant statement of the Christian faith: "*I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father*

except through Me." Jesus claims to be the *only* way to God. An exclusive statement, perhaps, but not prejudiced. It emphasizes the gravity of the Gospel: Humankind's sin problem has eternally distanced us from God, and only Jesus' offering on the cross can reconcile us with the Father. The question is not, *Are there other ways to God?* The question is, *Have you taken full advantage of the way God has provided through Jesus?*

Reflect. Jesus offers an incredible insight: *Loving God is the key to obeying God* (v.15). It's not detailed laws and commandments, but *love* that produces obedience. Which describes your walk with Christ—faith and love, or rules and regulations? Which reflects Christ's teachings?

○ **FRIDAY—JOHN 15**

Consider. Jesus uses another allegory—*The Vine and the Branches* (v.1). He teaches three things: Branches only produce fruit as they remain on the vine; the Gardener prunes branches to produce more fruit; and branches that don't bear fruit are cut off and burned. Consider an interesting nuance: *The branches have a mind of their own.* They can choose to remain and produce, or can be unproductive and cut off. How do we intentionally "cling" to the Vine? What is evidence of the Vine's fruit in your life?

Read.

- Jesus offers invaluable commodities. In the last chapter He offered *peace* (14:27). Today He offers *joy* (15:11). Believers know the fruit of peace and joy as they abide in the Vine. Unfortunately, others forfeit. Do you enjoy a daily peace and joy from Jesus?
- Jesus begins to call His disciples "*friends*" (v.13). Not only do they follow Him (v.14), but he takes them into His confidence (v.15). They are becoming insiders and will continue Jesus' mission after His Resurrection. Do you feel you are Jesus' friend? In what ways might Jesus confide in you?

Reflect. As we walk with Jesus, we can anticipate sharing in His experiences—including hatred and persecution from the world (vv.18-20). How have you experienced these things? Have you found the cost of peace with God worth the expense of being disliked by the world?

○ **SATURDAY—JOHN 16**

Consider. The reality of the cross is this: By faith in Christ, we gain immediate access to God. "*In that day you will ask (of the Father) in My Name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf*" (v.26.) As you trust in Christ, do you sense a face-to-face relationship with God?

Read.

- Jesus teaches a critical truth in v.7: "*Unless I go away, the Counselor (Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.*" Jesus' work on the cross permits the Holy Spirit to live inside believers. Once inside, the Spirit will "*guide you into all truth*" (v.13) In what ways do you sense the activity of the Holy Spirit in your daily life?
- Jesus speaks again of the persecution His followers will face (vv.1-4). Consider v.8 in that context: "*When He (the Holy Spirit) comes (indwells believers), He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin.*" The mere presence of God in a believer causes a sense of conviction in others. How have others reacted towards you as Christ grows in you?

Reflect. Jesus reminds us of a sobering reality: "*All this I have told you so that you will not go astray*" (v.1). Each of us is vulnerable to straying from Jesus. We can be tempted. Our willpower is limited. Even people of great faith have walked away from God. Today Jesus prescribed the solution: *Be filled with the Spirit, cling to the Vine, walk in obedience, stand in the face of persecution, and anticipate His return.* Following Jesus is not child's play. We are dealing with eternal consequences. Are you sensing the seriousness of faith in Christ? In what ways are you acting on what Christ is teaching you?

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