

# Love Letters

Reading Through the Gospels



Reading Guide  
Week #15

John 17-21



NEW HORIZON  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## Love Letters Reading Guide for Week #15

John 17-21

**A Week in Review.** Jesus has been making extraordinary claims about Himself: "I Am the Good Shepherd—I know My sheep and My sheep know Me" (10:14); "I Am the Resurrection and the Life—he who believes in Me will live, even though He dies" (11:25); "When I Am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself" (12:32). "I Am the Way and the Truth and the Life—no one comes to the Father except through Me" (v.14:6). "I Am the Vine, you are the branches—if a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5). Jesus' claims, signs, and life demonstrate He is no ordinary Man. And Jesus would have us believe that all of life, yes, even all of eternity, hinges on one choice: *Do we believe Jesus to be the One He claimed to be?*

**This Week's Reading.** We come to the end of the Book of John, the end of the Gospels, and the end of *Love Letters*. This will be the fourth time we accompany Jesus to His cross. John's is a powerful portrayal. From Jesus' prayer beforehand, to His arrest, trial and condemnation, to His crucifixion and Resurrection, He is fully in control of His destiny. He is *choosing* to lay down His life, and will take it up once again (ch.10:18). Jesus' majesty is apparent as He accomplishes His Father's will. "It is finished," Jesus says (ch 19:30). Indeed, God has prevailed, and humanity will be in God's debt and in God's favor forevermore.

### ○ MONDAY—JOHN 17

**Consider.** Today we may be reading the most powerful chapter in the entire Bible—the *Son of God prays to His Father in Heaven*. After weeks of watching from a distance as Jesus rises early and stays up late to pray, we finally get to listen in. We hear the heart of the Savior as He prays for Himself, His disciples, and us (v.20). How does it make you feel to be the object of Jesus' prayer on the night of His betrayal?

#### **Read.**

- Jesus prays for *unity* among His followers in vv.11,21,23. For Jesus, unity is more than common minds and hearts. True unity is the result of believers residing together in Jesus,

just as Jesus resides in the Father. Consider your relationships with other Christians. How are you challenged as you consider those ties as an essential part of your faith walk?

- Two times Jesus asks the Father to protect believers (vv.11,15.) The enemy of our souls is a formidable opponent who seeks to defeat the work of God in the lives of believers. How have you experienced both the enemy's work and the Father's protection in your life?

**Reflect.** Jesus begins His prayer, "Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You" (v.1). How will the cross bring glory to God? Wouldn't a miraculous rescue better demonstrate God's greatness? Apparently not. Instead, by His cross and resurrection, children of God will be born into the Kingdom. Their united, loving, vocal presence in the world will reflect the glory of God to every generation until Christ's return. How does this truth help you comprehend God's purpose for your life?

### ○ TUESDAY—JOHN 18

**Consider.** Today we follow Jesus to familiar territory—an olive grove outside Jerusalem (v.1). Here Jesus has spent hours with His disciples and His Father. His months of prayer have prepared Him for this very night. Jesus hasn't walked into a trap. He is offering Himself for His Father's purposes. How has God been preparing you for the challenges in your present circumstances?

#### **Read.**

- Have you noticed all Jesus' "I Am" statements in John's Gospel? Today's is perhaps the most striking: "I Am!" (v.5)—the same words God used to identify Himself to Moses (Exodus 3:14). Jesus no longer speaks in allegory. He states with utmost clarity His One-ness with the Father. How does it strike you that the Infinite God describes Himself in such simplistic terms?
- Notice how John weaves together two simultaneous trials—one of Jesus, the other of Peter (Kysar, p.80). Jesus emerges blameless, although condemned to die. Peter denies Jesus and his frailty is exposed. Here we see the human condition in light of the Savior: The Son of God remains guiltless,

while we stand condemned. How do you view your life in contrast to Jesus' example?

**Reflect.** Notice who is in charge during Jesus' arrest and trial: It is Jesus Himself. He stands in view of His betrayer. He approaches His accusers and gives Himself as their prisoner. He calmly answers the charges leveled against Him. This is God's hour, and all is happening as it must for God to accomplish His objective. God will not be thwarted by human activity, but will use it for His ends. When are times when God has prevailed in your life, even as you wrestled against Him?

---

### ○ WEDNESDAY—JOHN 19

**Consider.** Unknowingly spoken, the Jews summarize the gospel in v.7: "We have a law, and according to that law He must die..." The Law of God demanded life for life, and death for sin. In Christ, the penalty we deserve was levied against our Lord on the cross. The Law both required and foretold of Jesus' death. Looking back in your life, what were times when you, like the Jews, missed God's big picture?

**Read.**

- John affirms Jesus' divinity by naming the Scriptures that Jesus fulfills. In the crucifixion alone, John names four: vv.24,28,36,37. If one is willing to believe, John gives plenty of evidence. How is your faith affected in light of the prophecies Jesus fulfilled?
- In v.15, the crowds yell out to Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar!" They are pledging their allegiance to the very king they despise. Isn't it incredible how fickle the human heart can be? What have been times when you have compromised your convictions to satisfy an unbridled moment?

**Reflect.** Kysar offers two remarkable insights. First, Jesus carries His own cross to the place of execution, symbolizing that Jesus is in full control of His destiny (p.83). Second, the sign Pilate hangs over Jesus' is written in the three languages that encompassed the entire known world in that day, symbolizing that Jesus was dying for *all* (p.84). In no way is Jesus portrayed as a victim. Only as a conqueror. Our conqueror. In what ways has Jesus prevailed for you?

---

### ○ THURSDAY—JOHN 20

**Consider.** A devotional thought for the day. Two disciples run for the empty tomb (vv.3&ff). One stops short of entering, while the other plunges headlong. Following the example of the second, the first also enters (v.8b). Consider: Some seem to believe and commit with relative ease, while others are more hesitant. Yet the faith of the former can encourage the faith of the latter. How can you relate to both?

**Read.**

- John urges us to believe Jesus is One with God, and has rehearsed that theme over and over. He closes His Gospel by sharing his heart: "These things are written that you maybe believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His Name" (v.31). How has John provoked your thinking about Who Jesus is?
- What a joy it must have been to meet face to face with the resurrected Jesus! But revelation comes with responsibility. When Mary sees Jesus, He instructs her to tell the disciples (v.17). When He appears to the disciples, Jesus commissions them to tell others (v.21). Have you experienced our Risen Lord? To whom is Jesus sending you?

**Reflect.** Grief turns to joy in the presence of Jesus. Mary, the disciples, and Thomas, all experience their sorrow transformed to joy as Jesus appears to them. When has Jesus done the same for you?

---

### ○ FRIDAY—JOHN 21

**Consider.** The last chapter contains an uncanny uniqueness. Remember Jesus calling fishermen to leave their nets and follow Him? If so, you're remembering the incident from the other Gospels, not from John. In John, Jesus calls to the fishermen *after* His resurrection (v.5&ff). But the response is the same—spontaneous and immediate following after Jesus. After all, what allure does a boat full of fish hold when the Son of God calls your name? Describe your emotion and response as Jesus calls your name.

**Read.**

- V.15 begins what many refer to as "Peter's Reinstatement"—after Peter's denial Jesus

received him once again. Notice, neither Jesus nor Peter have forgotten. That's the way it is with our failures; they don't go away when we ignore them. They must be dealt with honestly and forthrightly. As Peter discovers, once we do so, we find ourselves again in joyful relationship with the Savior. When have you experienced the same? Are you up to date with your Savior today?

- Jesus asks Peter three times, "Simon son of John, do you love Me?", and each time Peter responds that he does (vv.15-17). But, Jesus is asking Peter for more than sentiment. Peter's love will be demonstrated by "following" (vv.19, 22). Jesus predicts that Peter will indeed follow—even to a martyr's death (v.19). What do you suppose your living communicates to the Savior?

**Reflect.** "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (v.25). John ends his Gospel in a very compelling way. The Story doesn't end here. Jesus' work continues to this day—loving, forgiving, healing, and sending. And, just as we've seen Jesus do along the way, He also compels us to join Him in His work. Has He captured your heart and faith? Will you join the countless who have followed Jesus? Jesus invites you to join His ranks. May His story become *your* story, and may your life bring great glory to our God.

---

Congratulations on completing *Love Letters*, and the 89 chapters of The Four Gospels. It is our hope that your experience has been both meaningful and challenging. *Please don't stop now!* Hopefully you are forming the life-long habit of daily Bible reading. Nothing compares with the joy of meeting with our Savior everyday in the pages of Scripture. May God grant you an insatiable appetite for His Word, and may it become your Daily Bread.

---

**New Horizon United Methodist Church**  
3002 W. Bloomington Rd.  
Champaign, IL 61822  
217-359-8909  
www.newhorizonchurch.org