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For this study, we took Dr. Tony Evans back to his hometown of Baltimore, Maryland. The Gospel of John is packed with foundational truths about our Savior. Dr. Evans teaches straight to the heart, and reminds us that we only find life in and through Jesus.

This study covers the first eleven chapters of the Book of John. It’s a great resource for both the long-time Christian who wants to revisit the foundation of their faith, and also for the new believer who is just beginning to learn who Jesus is.

Our team hopes this resource draws you closer to Jesus and inspires you to share your faith with those around you.

The mission of the church matters,

Brian Mosley
President, RightNow Media
Every group meeting is an improvisation. No matter how much you prepare, there’s always a chance that someone will ask a question you can’t answer, or that the discussion will go in an unforeseen direction. Maybe someone in the group has a crucial need you have to address. Maybe the Spirit gives you a new understanding of how a biblical teaching applies to the lives in your group.

This Leader’s Guide is a tool that helps you unpack a text. But it can be more than that. We’re giving you a document full of possibility. Our goal with the Leader’s Guide is to provide you with more than enough content to create life-changing discussion. So feel free to select only those parts or questions that you feel will best help your group.

If you’re new to group leading, you can simply follow along step by step. Remember that your job is to ask questions, not necessarily to give all the answers. It’s okay to let silence stretch its arms as your group thinks through the discussion. As you honor participant’s answers—even the half-baked ones—they’ll be encouraged to participate even more. Some of those answers may get fully baked in the group oven.

If you’re accustomed to doing your own thing, go for it! This guide provides ideas to help you do your job even better. Whether you’re a novice or a veteran, read through each lesson in advance. Know your options. Plan out those parts you’re likely to use. Develop a game plan.

We’ve provided handouts to use with each lesson. You’ll need to make enough copies for your entire group beforehand so participants can make notes along the way and remember the Scripture used in the Bible study. The handouts also include activities for further study during the week.

With that in mind, let’s preview the guide. The main body of the Leader’s Guide is written as a conversation you would have with your group. When there’s a specific question to ask, it appears in bold type. When we want to whisper directions in your ear, we’ll get your attention with Leader: then use italic type. If you’re looking for a quick answer, the suggested answer sometimes appears in (parentheses) after the question or in an italicized list.

But many of the questions are open for discussion, so they have no suggested answers. Instead, the paragraphs that follow after might include thoughts you could add to the discussion.

Each lesson has particular sections:

SESSION GOALS

This is the point of each session—the big idea and what we hope participants walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of studying the material. All of the teaching, questions, and reflections ultimately point back to these goals. They’re there primarily for your benefit as the group leader, but sharing them with the group may help structure your conversation.

OPEN

This is an icebreaker. Adjust it to the character of your group, but don’t skip it for several reasons: First, every group needs some transition time. Second, the people get to know each other. Finally, the introductory questions draw out practical connections between the subject matter and their lives.

READ & WATCH

We often rush into the interpretation of a Bible passage without really hearing what it says. For this study, we urge you to read the text slowly before you begin the analysis. Let people drink in the words and images for themselves. Then the video teaching from Tony Evans will make more sense. People will be able to compare it with their own impressions of the text.

Before watching the video, take a moment or two to walk through the “things to look for” questions. They’ll help concentrate participants’ attention on the parts of the video teaching that will be important for discussion afterward. Then, when you watch the video, make sure to set the audio at a comfortable level and everyone can see the screen. You don’t want your group to miss anything.
DISCUSS, GO DEEPER, AND PEEK AT THE GREEK

Here’s the meat of the Bible study: questions about the meaning of the text. The section usually starts with some “easy-answer” questions that review what the Scripture actually says. But then there are tougher questions about the whys and hows.

Every so often you’ll see a Go Deeper or a Peek at the Greek section. These are optional features, connecting you to other Scriptures on certain themes found in John or presenting a look at the original language of the text. You’re welcome to use the sections you think will best suit your group discussion. Go through in advance to see which ones seem most promising to you. Here are some factors to consider:

- Some people love exploring through the Bible and comparing references. Others, especially those who are rather new to Bible study, may get confused by it. They might not know where to find those other books of the Bible, and they might not be sure what 1 Corinthians or Genesis has to do with John anyway. In some cases, you could explain what the other passages say, or get individual group members to read the other passages, so the “exploration” is kept to a minimum.

- Any one of the Go Deeper explorations could become a rabbit trail, leading you away from what you intended to cover. Some groups like it that way, finding new adventures in the comparison of different parts of Scripture, but if you have a clear agenda for this study, keep a leash on the discussion.

- The Go Deeper cross-references serve as a sort of “elastic” for your meeting. If you’re running out of time, you can drop the Go Deeper content and the lesson will still make sense. But if you have plenty of time, these explorations can fill it productively.

- Peek at the Greek sections provide insight into the careful wording used in the book of John. A discussion of the original language may help to clarify a sticky issue in the text, so feel free to reference them as you see fit. However, some groups may find the technical analysis overwhelming. As with everything, it’s your call.

LAST WORD & LIVE IT OUT

This is an opportunity for your group to be challenged to do something with what they’ve learned. This study guide offers a menu of responses. Any one of them would be a valuable response to the lesson, but consider urging the group to respond both inwardly and outwardly. Many of us are very good at internal responses in which we treasure the lessons from John we just learned. But actually talking with a neighbor? Actually helping someone in need? Keep nudging your group to the more challenging responses.

READING PLAN

The Gospel of John is big. In order for your group to get the most out of their study of John, it’s worth reading intentionally through the whole thing. The reading plan offers your group a chance to read through John during the week. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study of John. A complete reading plan is available with the handout for session one.
Dr. Tony Evans is Founder and Senior Pastor of the 10,000-member Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, President of The Urban Alternative, and Chaplain of the NBA’s Dallas Mavericks. His radio broadcast, *The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans*, can be heard on nearly 1,000 U.S. radio outlets daily and in more than 130 countries. Tony was the first African-American to graduate with a doctoral degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. He has authored over 100 books, including *Oneness Embraced*, *The Kingdom Agenda*, *Raising Kingdom Kids*, *Victories in Spiritual Warfare*, *Kingdom Woman* and *Kingdom Man*. Tony and his wife, Lois, have four adult children.
SESSION 1: JOHN 1:1–34
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: God became a man to offer us the gift of eternal life, therefore each of us must decide for ourselves whether we will receive him or reject him.

Head Change: To understand that Jesus is God in human flesh, also called the Word, light, life, and Lamb.

Heart Change: To feel hope at having been offered an escape from darkness into eternal life.

Life Change: To receive Jesus as our substitute, believe in his name, and receive eternal life.

OPEN
Have you ever been summoned for jury duty? What was your most interesting experience on jury duty?

In John 1, we experience something similar to a courtroom trial. The author begins the book by laying his evidence on the table in an attempt to convince us who Jesus is. John makes his case, wanting us to see the truth about Jesus, believe in him, and receive the eternal life he offers us.

READ
John 1:1–34

What is the purpose of the Book of John?

What are the different names Jesus is given in John 1 and why are they important?

What is our appropriate response to Jesus, the risen Son of God?

Show Session 1: John 1:1–34 (11 minutes)

DISCUSS
Tony introduced our study of John by summing up the reason the book was written. Why was John written? What is its purpose? (Tony said, “The book was written so that men and women would believe on Jesus Christ and through their faith in Christ alone, receive eternal life.”)
Tony began by announcing the “celebrity of the universe,” Jesus Christ, pointing us to the first verses in chapter one. **How does John first introduce Jesus?**

**What is he called?** (The Word.)

**Read John 1:1–5.**

**What do we learn about the Word in these verses?**

(He is a person; he existed in the beginning with God; he’s the creator; he brings life and light; he is Jesus.)

We are typically conditioned to think of God the Father as the Creator of our world. But John tells us otherwise. **How does thinking about Jesus as the Creator of the Universe change your perspective of him?**

In what way could knowing that Jesus is the Creator produce hope for a person whose life needs change and restoration?

The introduction of John very intentionally mimics the introduction to the whole Bible—Genesis 1. **What similar words, phrases, and style do you see between John 1:1–5 and Genesis 1:1–3?** (In the beginning, God, darkness, light, creation).

Just as “in the beginning, God created,” here we see the Word, Jesus, in the act of a recreation. The Word, the One who created the world in the beginning, steps down into his creation to remake it.

In the beginning, he spoke light into the darkness and creation burst forth. Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world, but when they sinned, they introduced a new kind of darkness that fractured creation. It is this new darkness that Jesus enters as the true light. He himself is the light coming in to the darkness that has encompassed his creation.

**What specific darkness encompasses our world today?** (Hatred toward God; hatred toward others; violence; depression; sickness; death; moral confusion; etc.)

**Have you ever considered your sin as darkness? In what ways does sin obscure your spiritual sight and clarity?**

**What promise does verse 5 make about the light and darkness?** (The light shines, and the darkness does not overcome it.)

We have many sources of light in our world—the sun, moon, stars, electricity flowing to illuminate houses and streetlamps, lanterns, candles, etc. **What is the nature and purpose of light? What is it used for? What does it do?** (Stimulates sight; makes things visible; illuminates; warms; cheers; brings understanding of a problem or mystery; makes things grow through photosynthesis; ignites.)
Jesus, the Word, is frequently referred to as the light. After considering what light does, what might this mean about how Jesus will illuminate, bring visibility, or grow people in the world? What effect could his light have on your life?

Jesus is the true light, come to break through the darkness of sin and death. He illuminates our minds and causes us to understand reality, making the true state of our hearts and our world visible. He also brings comfort and ignites our passion to follow him.

Read John 1:9–18.

What was the world’s response to Jesus? (Verses 10–11: His own people did not know or receive him.)

The world was repelled by the light, preferring instead to stay immersed in darkness. Essentially, they chose to remain blind. But not everyone rejects Jesus.

According to verse 12, what was given to those who received him? (The right to become children of God.)

Take a moment to think about this reality: when you, by faith, accept Jesus you become a child of God. What rights and privileges come with being God’s child?

If a person receives Jesus (by believing in his name) and becomes a child of God, what evidence would be visible in his or her life? If a person rejects Jesus, how do you think his or her life would demonstrate that?

Our bodies receive light through our physical eyes. If our eyes lack the capability to receive light, we have no sight. Those who receive Jesus, the true light, are given a new spiritual capacity for his light, gifted with new spiritual “eyes” and spiritual sight. Jesus, the light, brings illumination and understanding to our hearts.

PEEK AT THE GREEK

The term translated “dwelt” in verse 14 comes from the Greek verb skenóo and means, “to have one’s tent, dwelling, or tabernacle.” The word “tabernacle” calls to mind the portable tent in the Israelite camp while the people wandered in the wilderness between Egypt and the Promised Land. The Tabernacle was God’s portable earthly dwelling place. It was constructed with luxurious fabrics and colors, depicting imagery meant to evoke the Garden of Eden, where God and man enjoyed unhindered fellowship. God’s presence would fill the Tabernacle, where he would dwell with his people. John 1:14 literally says, “And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.” In Jesus, God put on flesh and came to dwell with his people in unhindered fellowship, reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. The same Greek verb is used in Revelation 21, when we are promised that on the new earth, God will tabernacle with his people and be with them forever.
Tony talks about us being hit with a “spiritual two by four” in verse 14, “and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”. If you’ve been a Christian for any length of time, the idea that the Son of God became human may have become “common” for you, but take a moment to consider the gravity of that reality.


The Son of God, who existed in eternity past in perfect union with the Father and the Spirit was willing to leave heaven and become one of us. What response should we have to that reality?

Verse 17 reminds us that the Law was given through Moses. As the Israelites made camp in the wilderness between Egypt and the Promised Land, God’s Presence filled the Tabernacle. During that time, God met with Moses on Mount Sinai to give the Ten Commandments to the people. What came through Jesus? (Grace and truth.)

Why do you think grace and truth are needed in addition to the Law? (Humans are not able to fulfill the Law. We needed something more.)

While the Law was good and perfect, we could not fulfill it. Holiness is unattainable for us on our own. Jesus brings the truth—that we are incapable of reaching the Law’s standard. But he does not stop there. He also supplies grace—the unmerited favor of God, purchased by his perfect, sinless life and sacrificial death on the cross. Jesus fulfills the requirements of the Law for us.

Jesus comes to earth as a better “Moses.” While Moses hid his face from God’s presence, unable to look upon his glory, Jesus reveals God’s exact nature to us.

What feelings rise up in you to know that the pressure is off of you to live up perfectly to the Law? What difference does it make knowing that someone has completed this all-important task for you?

Read John 1:19–34.

John the Baptist caused quite the controversial stir among the people. The priests and Levites sought him out and demanded to know who he was and what he had to say about himself.

John the Baptist responds to their questions with a quote in verse 23. What is John the Baptist quoting? (The Old Testament prophet Isaiah, in Isaiah 40:3.)

In what ways is John the Baptist similar to the Old Testament prophets? (He is also rejected and ignored, like many of the earlier prophets.)

In a sense, John the Baptist himself represents all the prophets, bridging the gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

What does John the Baptist say about Jesus when he sees him? (“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”)

The Christian life is a process. Though Jesus has removed our sin, we often still continue to struggle in it. Do you ever struggle with a particular sin, or feel as though Jesus has not removed your sin? How do you handle that paradox?
Why do Christians continue to struggle with sin? (Even though Christ has paid the price for our sins and they have “been removed,” we have free will and can still choose to sin.)

How does the fact that you still can sin affect your ongoing relationship with Jesus?

Since Jesus has removed our sin, he sees us as being perfect and blameless. Even though we’re not there on this side of eternity, he receives us as though we are already sanctified. Such a warm reception draws us toward him. And as we come to understand the gospel more, and fall deeper in love with Jesus, our desire to sin should diminish.

**GO DEEPER**

Learn more about the symbolism of the Lamb from the following passages: *Exodus 12:1–28; Is. 53; 1 Pt. 1:18–19*

**What were the Israelites instructed to do with the blood of the Passover lamb in Exodus 12?** (Slaughter the lamb and paint the blood on the doorposts of their houses.)

**What did the blood provide cover and protection from?** (When the blood marked their homes, the Lord passed over them and did not allow the destroyer to touch them. They were saved from death.)

**How does this provide a parallel picture of what Jesus accomplishes on the cross?** (He is the slaughtered lamb. When his blood covers us, eternal death and judgment pass over us.)

**According to 1 Peter 1:18–19, what does the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb, ransom us from?** (Our futile ways we inherited from our forefathers.)

We were ransomed, not with silver and gold, but with Christ’s very blood. What difference does this make? How might knowing this keep you from choosing sin in the future?

Jesus Christ is the ultimate Passover Lamb. Because he lived a perfect life without blemish, his blood cleanses us from sin and shields us from the punishment of his wrath. He ransoms us from the futility of sin.

Both John and John the Baptist make huge claims about Jesus’s identity in chapter 1. Whether calling him the Word, the Creator, the light, or the Lamb of God, these men assert the claim that Jesus is God, with a crucial role to play in the fate of humanity.

John and John the Baptist were Israelites. They knew the laws and commandments of the Torah and what it meant to “have no other gods before Yahweh.” For them to claim that Jesus was God made a statement. They risked being ostracized by their community and people, and even possible death, to make this claim. They also knew the political consequences from making the claim that Israel’s Messiah King had arrived: conflict with Rome.

**What consequences would you (or do you) face for boldly proclaiming that Jesus is God in your community?**
LAST WORD

John was written so men and women would believe in Jesus Christ and receive eternal life through their faith in him. John makes a powerful case about Jesus—this Word, who existed in the beginning with God, is God. He created everything, he brings life, and he is the true light.

Clothing himself in human flesh, he stepped down into the darkness to illuminate the hearts and minds of men, to invite them back into relationship with him. Many choose to remain in blindness and darkness, but those who believe become his children.

The pages of John are littered with legal language—he talks about the “rights” of the children of God, of John the Baptist’s call to “bear witness” to the light, to “confess his testimony” about Jesus. In the same way, every one of us is called upon to deliver a verdict about this Jesus. We cannot remain neutral. Once we encounter him, we must settle on a decision about him.

What is your verdict? Who is this Jesus? Will you stay in darkness? Or receive the true light?

The book of John will make a case that pleads for you to believe in Christ and receive the eternal life he offers. And once you realize who Jesus is, then, as Tony said, “you give him all you got because he’s the only one in the universe worthy of all you have.”

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

Pray: Be honest with God. Have a conversation with him about who Jesus is. What do you think of the Word who is also the Creator, light, and Lamb? Ask God to help you see Jesus for who he is as you study through the book of John.

Memorize: John 1:14 this week. As you commit this verse to memory, meditate on the way Jesus put on flesh to be with us and save us.

Discuss: Spend time with a friend and share one new thing you learned in this session. Is there some attribute of Jesus that you haven’t seen before?

READING PLAN

Leader: In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

Week 1
- Day 1: 1:1–18
- Day 2: 1:19–28
- Day 3: 1:29–34
- Day 4: 1:35–42
- Day 5: 1:43–51
SESSION BIG IDEA
God became a man to offer us the gift of eternal life, therefore each of us must decide for ourselves whether we will receive him or reject him.

PERSONAL REFLECTION
Have you ever considered your sin as darkness? In what ways does sin obscure your spiritual sight and clarity?

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO

What is the purpose of the Book of John?

What are the different names Jesus is given in John 1 and why are they important?

What is our appropriate response to Jesus, the risen Son of God?

BIBLE STUDY NOTES: JOHN 1:1–34

Notes

LIVE IT OUT
Select at least one activity to complete before next week.

Pray: Be honest with God. Have a conversation with him about who Jesus is. What do you think of the Word who is also the Creator, light, and Lamb? Ask God to help you see Jesus for who he is as you study through the book of John.

Memorize: Memorize John 1:14 this week. As you commit this verse to memory, meditate on the way Jesus put on flesh to be with us and save us.

Discuss: Spend time with a friend and share one new thing you learned in this session. Is there some attribute of Jesus that you haven’t seen before?

READING PLAN

Week 1
- Day 1: 1:1–18
- Day 2: 1:19–28
- Day 3: 1:29–34
- Day 4: 1:35–42
- Day 5: 1:43–51
SESSION 2:

JOHN 1:35–51

Quick Start

READ
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

PRINT
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Experiencing Jesus and becoming his followers should motivate us to invite others to experience him and follow him too.

Head Change: To understand that Jesus invites us to follow him now in this life, not just for our eternal destiny.

Heart Change: To be so impacted and appreciative of Jesus’s sacrifice for us that any inhibitions we have of inviting others to follow Jesus are overcome.

Life Change: To invite others to experience and follow Jesus for themselves.

READ
John 1:35–51

WATCH
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

What does Jesus invite Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and us, to do?

How does the news about Jesus spread?

What does following Jesus by faith really look like?

As John 1 continues, we see the first disciples begin to experience Jesus for themselves. Rather than rely on other people’s opinions of him, each of them encounter Jesus for themselves.

As a friend ever raved about a new restaurant? Or maybe your sibling can’t stop talking about the latest movie release. Or it could be your neighbor, who insists she has found the greatest new country band. Whatever the case, sometimes we can be skeptical and hesitant to believe others’ opinions until we experience something for ourselves.

Have you ever been skeptical about a new experience, food, or entertainment choice, only to become its biggest fan after you experienced it? Describe the situation. What happened that changed your mind?

Show Session 2: John 1:35–51 (10 minutes)
DISCUSS

We were introduced to Jesus in session one as the Word, Creator, Light, Life, and Lamb. As we continue through John chapter one, we hear John the Baptist again refer to Jesus as “the Lamb of God.”

Tony explains that as the Lamb of God, Jesus was “specifically designated as the final solution to the problem of the sinfulness of mankind on a permanent basis.” Jesus’s sacrifice will radically change the way humans interact with God.

What two of John the Baptist’s disciples do after hearing John call Jesus the Lamb of God? (They follow Jesus.)

These men ask Jesus where he is staying. Rather than simply tell them the answer to their question, he issues an invitation.

Why do you think Jesus invites them to “come and see”? What do you think his motivation is?

Jesus invites them to see and experience him for themselves. He’s offering more than a casual conversation, he’s offering them a relationship. This offer mirrors Psalm 34:8, which says, “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!” As David urged Israel to experience the Lord’s goodness, Jesus extends the opportunity to these men to experience him for themselves.

What has been your personal experience of Jesus? What have you discovered about him? In what specific ways do you take him up on the invitation to “come and see”?

Andrew was one of the first two men who followed Jesus. What did he do first? Who did he find? (He first found his brother Simon and told him about the Messiah.)

Tony pointed out the way Andrew, in his excitement about Jesus, went first to his own family to share the news. Is there anyone in your family who hasn’t yet met Jesus? How could you share the news about Jesus with your family?

Often, we shrink back from sharing the news about Christ because we don’t know where to start. But God has given each of us a sphere of influence, made up of a smaller number of people. We must start with those close to us. Who else is part of your circle of influence? How could you begin to share Jesus with them?
Read John 1:40–42.

When Jesus sees Simon, what three things does he tell Simon about himself? (You are Simon. You’re John’s Son. You will be called Cephas, or Peter.)

“You are Simon.” What supernatural knowledge does Jesus display about Simon when he makes this statement? (Jesus knows who Simon is in the present moment. He knows all about his life, circumstances, and personality.)

“…the son of John.” What supernatural knowledge does Jesus display about Simon when he makes this statement? (Jesus knows Simon’s past. He knows where he came from, he knows about his family, and everything that has happened to him.)

“You shall be called Cephas.” What supernatural knowledge does Jesus display about Simon when he makes this statement? (Jesus knows Simon’s future. He has plans for him. He knows who Simon will be one day. He gives him a new identity.)

As Tony said in his teaching, Jesus has supernatural knowledge about Simon. He knows everything about every individual. After Jesus tells Simon his past and present, Jesus changes his identity and gives him a new name.

Jesus’s words to Peter reflect what happens for every person who receives Jesus. Jesus makes sense of our past and present, then gives us a new identity as children of God, and a new future.

Peter’s life was radically altered when he met Jesus. No longer a fisherman, he was used mightily by God to build the Church. Following Christ changes the trajectory of our lives. When we meet Jesus, we are given a new identity as a child of God, and a new destiny. Jesus says to us, “This is who you are. But in me, that is who you will be.”

In what specific ways has Jesus changed your own identity?

What might your life look like today if you had not ever met Jesus?

Read John 1:43–46.

In this passage, we see Jesus making the intentional decision to go to Galilee to seek out his next disciple, Philip. Here we see Jesus’s intentionality and care in seeking us.

How have you seen God seek you out? In what instances or circumstances in your life have you seen him intentionally pursue you?

What is Jesus’s invitation to Philip? (Follow me.)

PEEK AT THE GREEK

The term translated “follow” in verse 43 comes from the Greek verb ἀκολουθεῖν and means, “accompany, attend, join.” It paints a picture of walking the same road as another, conforming wholly to their example, and cleaving steadfastly to them. Jesus’s invitation to Phillip, “Follow me,” speaks of deep relationship and fellowship. He wants his disciples to pattern their lives after his own and to walk the same road of a life lived in submission to God. Though the disciples don’t know it yet, Jesus’s life will include both great joy and deep suffering. This is what he invites each of us today to follow him into—to deep relationship, to conform our lives to his, and to suffering that leads to the joy of his Kingdom.
Jesus’s call to “follow me” is an issue of both salvation in eternity and obedience in this present life. Tony said, “God never saves you for heaven so that you can ignore him on earth.”

Do you think people typically view following Jesus as a one-time event, or as an ongoing lifestyle? Why? What is the difference between the two?

It can be easy to view “following Jesus” as a one-time event, at the moment when we make the decision to trust him for our salvation. But truly following him requires us to walk the path he walks over the course of our lives. Salvation and obedience under Jesus’s rule are unmistakably connected. As Tony said, if we’re going to claim salvation from Jesus, we need to follow him as Lord.

Tony warned us not to divorce salvation in eternity from God’s purposes for us in this life. Why must the everyday act of following Jesus begin in this life? How do our choices in this life affect our eternity?

If a person wants salvation for eternity, but rejects obedience to Jesus in this life, whom are they truly following? Why?

Each of us chooses a king to follow, whether it is ourselves or another person. To truly follow Jesus means we begin to obey him now, in this life, before we ever reach eternity.

Often, we can tell whom we are truly following when we look at the way our choices manifest in real life.

If we are totally honest with ourselves, what might our thought life tell us about who we are truly following? (Possible areas to consider: news and social media outlets; movie and entertainment choices; daydreams; books read, etc.)

It’s interesting to note that social media uses the term “follow” for the people, accounts, and news feeds we subscribe to. How might the social media pages you “follow” influence the person you are becoming?

What might your relationships or bank account display about who you are truly following? (Possible areas to consider: deep emotional ties; friendships; time and calendar; sources of comfort; vacations or spending money, etc.)
Typically, we want to be in charge of our story. But choosing to follow Jesus is an alteration of our destiny. When we make him Lord of our life and choose to obey him, we open ourselves up to a bigger story.

Tony talked about the way Jesus makes us an exciting offer. **How does following Jesus bring a new type of purpose to life?** (We get to live “on mission.” Our lives have purpose, and we get the anticipation of being used by God to reach others and participate in what he is doing on earth.)

**As you have followed Jesus, what are some of the ways he has used you to play a role in his Kingdom?** (Consider relationships, work, church, evangelism, talents, etc.)

We must choose Jesus for our eternal destiny and live a life of obedience under his rule. The joys of relationship with Jesus and the story he is writing for eternity begins now, in this life.

So far, we have seen a contagious, domino-like effect as the news about Jesus has spread from person to person. **Up to now, which people in John’s gospel have told others about Jesus?** (John the Baptist told his disciples about Jesus. Andrew told Simon Peter. Philip told Nathanael.)

This is the way the gospel spreads: person-to-person, one to one, until the whole world has heard the news about Jesus’s invitation to follow him.

Think about your own story. **Who shared the gospel with you? Do you know who shared it with that person? Who have you shared the gospel with?**

Somehow, through a long chain of individual people, the news about Jesus has spread from Galilee, over 2,000 years ago, to you.

**What does this mean about how the gospel spreads and the Church grows? What are the implications for your personal responsibility in this process?** (The gospel spreads one person at a time. This means that we are free to focus on sharing with one person at a time, as God leads. We aren’t all responsible for sharing with the masses.)

We are called to be ambassadors of light, sharing the news about Jesus with the dark world in which we live.

**Read John 1:45–51.**

Philip arrives to share the news with Nathanael. **What do you notice about Philip that demonstrates he has begun to follow Jesus?** (Philip sounds like Jesus. He uses the same phrase Jesus used: “Come and see.”)

Nathanael is the next person in line to hear about Jesus, but he responds to Philip’s news with doubt and cynicism. He is skeptical that anything good could come from Nazareth. But he decides to find out for himself. As he approaches, Jesus says, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” In astonishment, Nathanael asks, “How do you know me?”

**What does Jesus’s statement about Nathanael teach us about Jesus?** (With one statement, Jesus shows Nathanael that he knows Nathanael’s inner heart, his character. He knows everything about Nathanael.)

**What does Jesus’s answer to Nathanael’s question teach us about Jesus?** (Jesus knew about Nathanael’s outward circumstances without having seen him. He knew about a possibly meaningful moment in Nathanael’s life. He knows everything.)

Jesus dispels Nathanael’s doubts by demonstrating that he is the Messiah, and he knows everything. Tony referred to this as Jesus’s omniscience: he knows everything about everything, including everything about you. He knows you better than you know you.
GO DEEPER

Learn more about the depth to which God knows and sees you from the following passages:
Psalm 56:8; Jeremiah 1:5a; Psalm 139:1–16; Romans 8:29

Psalm 56 tells us that God keeps count of our tossings and tears. **What does this display about his character?**

According to Jeremiah 1, God knew us before he formed us in our mother’s womb. **Have you ever considered that at some point in eternity past, you were a thought in God’s mind? How does that knowledge—that he thought of you and intentionally formed all your characteristics—change the way you think about yourself?**

According to Psalm 139, what types of things does God know about us? (When we sit and rise, our thoughts, our ways, our words, our location, our bodies, our frame, our days.)

In session one, we learned that Jesus is the true light, coming in to the world. Consider Psalm 139:11–12.

In what ways do you think people try to cover themselves in darkness in order to hide from God? According to these verses, is this possible? Why or why not?

How could this Psalm encourage you to live in complete honesty with God, to keep nothing back from him?

We are known completely by Jesus Christ—both our inner hearts, and our outer circumstances. His care for and knowledge of us is complete. He knows our shame and our failures, yet still invites us to follow him.
When Nathanael decides to follow Jesus, he confesses, “You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” We hear a bit of humor in Jesus’s personality when he responds with, “Because I saw you under the fig tree?” But then, in seriousness, he promises, “You will see greater things than this. You’ll see Heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

Tony said, “God does not want you to simply believe in him without seeing more of him.” Why would God want to reveal more of himself to us? How does that confirm his desire to have a relationship with us?

What does this tell us about Jesus? (He is the “ladder,” the connection between heaven and earth.)

Because of our broken fellowship with God due to sin, are we able to climb this ladder high enough, to reach the standard Jesus does, to reach “heaven”? (No.)

Consider Jesus’s incarnation and life. How did he move toward us instead of requiring us to climb to Heaven? (He became human to come dwell with us.)

When Jesus calls himself the ladder, he reveals the way we have fellowship with God. We don’t climb up this ladder. Rather, God himself comes down to us.

Jacob names this location Bethel. It means “House of God.” He experienced God’s presence there. How is the meaning of Bethel fully realized in Jesus’s dwelling on earth? (Jesus is the true Bethel. We can now experience his presence as his followers. In him, we’re made right with God and invited into his presence for all eternity.)

What does this reality mean for your life today? (We can know and experience God today; we have unhindered access to God because of Jesus. We get to see the “supernatural” break in upon the natural.)

Life is no longer ordinary for the follower of Jesus. Just as Jacob unexpectedly saw the supernatural break in upon the natural, we are now awake to all God is supernaturally doing in the world around us today. This is what we’re invited into when we follow Jesus.

The news about Jesus spreads from person to person, one to the next. Each of us is invited to “come and see,” to experience him for ourselves. When we do, we find a Savior who knows everything about us, and cares deeply. We are invited to enjoy his presence all the time. When we take Jesus up on his offer to follow him, we are given a new identity and destiny, and wake up to all God is supernaturally doing in our world today.
In what specific ways have you seen God working supernaturally in the past month? (Consider provision, relationships, guidance, healing, etc.)

Who is one person you can invite to “come and see”? What can you share with him or her about how Jesus—who knows everything about you—has changed your life?

LAST WORD

Jesus invites Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael to “come and see,” to follow him. When they do experience him for themselves, they find a Savior who knows them better than they know themselves, and they are given a new identity and purpose.

When we choose to follow Jesus, he compels us to invite others to follow as well. Because we experience his presence, we live with purpose, on mission. We see the supernatural break in to the natural, but only if we are willing to live by faith. Tony concluded the video by saying, “Only when you follow Christ in faith will you experience his reality deeper, greater, and longer in your life.”

Have you experienced Jesus for yourself? Are you following him by faith? Will you surrender every aspect of your life to him?

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

Pray: Ask God to reveal himself to you so you can see for yourself what he is like

Create: Create a chain to represent the spread of the gospel. Using pictures, paper clips, rubber bands, paper, or some other object, link each piece together to visually tell the story of how the gospel has spread in your family. Use one link to represent yourself. The next adjoining link should represent the person who shared the gospel with you. Begin to share the gospel with others and add links to your chain.

Journal: What or who are you truly following? What do your relationships, entertainment choices, social media account, finances, or schedule reveal about who you are following and how that is influencing your life?

READING PLAN

Leader: In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

Week 2

- Day 1: 2:1–5
- Day 2: 2:6–12
- Day 3: 2:13–17
- Day 4: 2:18–22
- Day 5: 2:23–25
SESSION BIG IDEA
Experiencing Jesus and becoming his followers should motivate us to invite others to experience him and follow him too.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO
What does Jesus invite Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and us, to do?

How does the news about Jesus spread?

What does following Jesus by faith really look like?

PERSONAL REFLECTION
What has been your personal experience of Jesus? What have you discovered about him? In what specific ways do you take him up on the invitation to “come and see”?

In what specific ways has Jesus changed your own identity?

LIVE IT OUT
Select at least one activity to complete before next week.

Pray: Ask God to reveal himself to you so you can see for yourself what he is like

Create: Create a chain to represent the spread of the gospel. Using pictures, paper clips, rubber bands, paper, or some other object, link each piece together to visually tell the story of how the gospel has spread in your family. Use one link to represent yourself. The next adjoining link should represent the person who shared the gospel with you. Begin to share the gospel with others and add links to your chain.

Journal: What or who are you truly following? What do your relationships, entertainment choices, social media account, finances, or schedule reveal about who you are following and how that is influencing your life?

BIBLE STUDY NOTES: JOHN 1:35–51
Notes

READING PLAN
Week 2
- Day 1: 2:1–5
- Day 2: 2:6–12
- Day 3: 2:13–17
- Day 4: 2:18–22
- Day 5: 2:23–25
SESSION 3:
JOHN 2:1–25

Quick Start

READ
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

PRINT
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session's handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader's Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Since Jesus has come to reveal himself as the Messiah through signs, the miracles he performs and the claims he makes give us evidence on which to base our decision to follow him or reject him.

Head Change: To understand that the signs Jesus performs are symbols that reveal more about him.

Heart Change: To feel the joy in life that Jesus wants you to have by following after him with all your heart no matter your past.

Life Change: To open yourself to receive and experience more of Jesus through trusting obedience.

OPEN

What is the most memorable wedding you have ever been part of? What made it memorable—the flowers? The couple? The dinner? The setting? The dancing? The officiant’s message?

READ

John 2:1–25

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

Why does timing matter to God?

In what ways do we make God a means to our own selfish end?

Show Session 3: John 2:1–25 (10 minutes)

DISCUSS

Chapter two opens with Jesus’s inaugural sign. Throughout the book of John, during Jesus’s ministry, he repeatedly performs specific signs. Those signs act as symbols, tell us a story, and give us information about who Jesus is. As we examine this first sign at the wedding in Cana, we want to answer the question, “What is Jesus telling us about himself with this sign?”
What does it tell you about Jesus that he went to a wedding with his mother and disciples?

People often get the impression that following Jesus means a life devoid of fun and celebration. Yet Jesus not only attends this wedding with his family and friends, he also ends up saving the party.

Would others say that you are a joyful, social person? Why or why not? What might you do to engage more with others?

We tend to view Jesus (rightly) as God, but we need to remember that he was also fully human. Like us, he experienced the milestones, memories, and joys of life. At this wedding, Jesus reveals much about himself with his first miracle.

**GO DEEPER**

Learn more about the significance of the context of Jesus’s first miracle, a wedding feast, from the following passages: *Matthew 22:2–10; Revelation 19:6–9; 21:1–5; Isaiah 25:6–9*

**According to the passage in Matthew, what does Jesus describe using the imagery of a wedding feast?** (The Kingdom of Heaven.)

**What scene does Revelation 19:6–9 describe?** (The Marriage of the Lamb; the Bride ready in pure, bright linen.)

Who does “the Lamb” refer to in this passage? (Jesus—also called the Lamb in the Book of John.)

**What are the promises, or vows, made in Revelation 21:1–5?** (God will dwell with his bride forever. He will wipe away every tear. The former things have passed away, and all things will become new.)

**How is the passage in Isaiah similar to the wedding passages in Revelation? What similar language and themes do you note in these verses?** (A feast of rich food; well-aged wine, well-refined wine; death swallowed up forever; tears wiped away.)

**If the Kingdom of Heaven is described as a wedding feast, what information does this give us about this Kingdom?** (It’s a celebration, a feast, joyful, a gathering of love and commitment.)

Tony talked about this when he referenced Jesus’s social nature, and the way wine represents joy. Is this consistent with the way you think of following Jesus? Do you see Christianity as boring, rule-following drudgery, or a feast of joy? Why?

What are some practical ways a person can begin to feast on God and enjoy following Jesus now? A wedding is a significant symbol that points to the Kingdom of God. This makes Jesus’s choice of location for his first public sign especially meaningful. When Jesus performs a miracle at the wedding in Cana, he is undoubtedly looking ahead and communicating something about his own Wedding Feast, the ultimate wedding, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.
Read John 2:1–5.

Tony referenced Mary’s anxiety during this wedding. What is Jesus’s mother upset about when she comes to Jesus? Why are her concerns important? (The bride and groom have run out of wine for their feast. This would be a lasting social embarrassment and would end the party.)

Jesus has an odd, unexpected response to her statement. What is his reply? (“My hour has not yet come.”)

To what is Jesus referring by the term “my hour”? (Consider later passages in the Book of John for helpful context: John 7:30, 8:20, 12:27, 13:1) (The “hour” refers to Jesus’s death.)

Why would Jesus be connecting the hour of his death to a wedding? (To have his Wedding Feast, the Marriage Feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6–10), Jesus would first need to die to pay for the sins of humanity.)

In reference to Jesus’s statement about the time not yet coming, Tony said, “sometimes we look for glory based on our time when God wants us to serve based on his time, and he’ll take care of the glory in his own time.” Have you ever asked God to do something for you based on your time and ultimately for your glory? What can we do to resist that temptation?

PEEK AT THE GREEK

The word translated “purification” in verse 6 is the Greek noun καθαρισμός and signifies cleansing, washing, or purifying. The Jews were required to go through purifying rituals to atone for their sin, specifically on the Day of Atonement, which is described in Leviticus 16. On that day, Israel’s High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies and meet with God to atone for the sin of the people. When animal sacrifices were made, the blood would cleanse the people from their sin. This is especially significant in the context of John 2 and the wedding at Cana. When Jesus uses jars meant for purification, he is making a statement about the way he will atone for our sin. He is our High Priest who atones for us with his own blood, giving us access to God.

Tony reminded us in this session that obedience matters to God. Tony said, “Sometimes when Jesus tells us to do something, it won’t make sense, but it doesn’t have to if Jesus is the one giving you the instruction. It makes sense, because of who it came from not necessarily because you understand it.” Have you ever experienced God telling you to do something that didn’t seem to make sense? How did it turn out?

Why is it important for us to obey, even when we don’t understand God’s methods or plan?

Read John 2:6–11.

What does Jesus tell the servants to do? (Fill the jars with water.)

What were the water jars’ original purposes? (Jewish rites of purification.)
Tony also shared the truth that sometimes, people wait for a miracle, but God is waiting for them to move first. **How does action demonstrate faith more than inaction does?**

When the master of the feast tastes the wine Jesus created, he doesn't know where it came from. In surprise, he whispers to the bridegroom, “You have kept the good wine until now!”

Jesus’s wine is better than what was being served. What he offers is far superior to our best supply.

We often feast on the things the world offers us. **Have you truly experienced what Jesus provides as being better than the other things you feast upon? In what way?**

Many believers would admit that they have not experienced it as better. **Why do you think this is?**

In his first miracle, Jesus turns water into choice wine, a wine so good the master of the feast was surprised it had been saved for later. Tony makes a very important point here, he says, “Some of the greatest things God’s gonna do in your life won’t be on the front end. They’ll be on the backend.” **How does that give you hope?**

**Read John 2:13–22.**

**What events in the Temple made Jesus angry?** (Moneychangers were selling oxen, sheep, and pigeons.)

**What was the intended purpose of the Temple?** (The purpose of the Temple was fellowship with God.)

**What were these men using the Temple for?** (The men were using it for selfish gain, personal purposes, dishonest profit.)
This incident demonstrates just how broken humanity has become—rather than seeking fellowship and friendship with God, they were using him for their own selfish gain and as a means to an end. The same thing happens today.

**In what ways do Christians in the Church make God a means to an end today?**

Because of sin, our default is to use God, rather than see fellowship with him as the goal, the true “end game.” In order for us to experience God rightly, God must give us new hearts, hearts that desire fellowship with him.

**Would you say you desire and enjoy God for his own sake, or see him more as a way to get to other desires? What can we do to move toward seeking a closer relationship with God?**

Jesus makes a claim at the Temple when his zeal moves him to drive out the moneychangers with a whip. When the Jews ask him what sign he will give for cleansing the Temple (basically asking him to prove he possessed the authority to do so), Jesus tells them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

**To what Temple is Jesus referring?** (His body.)

**What does Jesus mean by “raise it up”?** (After three days, he will rise from the dead. Jesus prophesies his own death and resurrection. After being crucified, he will rise from the dead, defeating death forever.)

**Why might Jesus be comparing himself to the Temple?**

The Temple was God’s dwelling place. In John chapter one, we learned that Jesus was God, come to dwell with us. Because of Jesus’s arrival, a building was no longer needed to meet with God. In him, we find fellowship with God.

Through Jesus you have access to God. **Do you think most Christians live as though they have access to God? Why or why not?**

**In what specific ways do you enjoy fellowship with God in your daily life?**

**Read John 2:23–25.**

**What was the result of these two signs?** (Many believed in him.)
Why didn’t Jesus entrust himself to these people? (He knew what was in their hearts.)

Jesus, like with Nathanael, knew the hearts of the people. While his disciples believed and were given faith to obey and the opportunity to see greater things, others who believed had not yet surrendered to the same degree.

Have you experienced God revealing more of himself to you over time? What are some examples? How are you creating space in your life to experience more of him?

LAST WORD

Jesus began to reveal himself as the Messiah through his inaugural sign, water turned to wine at a wedding feast, and through his claim that he would rise after three days, a claim that we know he accomplishes by his resurrection.

He is after our hearts and our true worship. Rather than making him a means to an end, he wants true fellowship with us. Jesus wants to reveal more of himself to us, but we must choose to receive him, to obey him, and trust his timing.

Take a moment to digest Tony’s parting comments, “Give [Jesus] the opportunity to show you more by giving him more of you even when the timing doesn’t seem to fit, even when he’s asking you to do something that doesn’t make sense, then he’s just getting started to show you how awesomely big he really is.”

Are you ready to see more and follow him?

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

Memorize: Choose a verse from Revelation 19:6–9, Revelation 21:1–5, or Isaiah 25:6–9 to memorize and meditate upon this week.

Discuss: Spend time with a friend and discuss your experience of Christianity and a relationship with Jesus. Do you view your faith as drudgery? Or do you experience it as a feast?

Journal: Are there ways you may be making God a means to an end, rather than your end goal? How might you be missing out on true worship by using him for your own gain? Journal what true fellowship and friendship with God could look like in your life.

READING PLAN

Leader: In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

Week 3

- Day 1: 3:1–8
- Day 2: 3:9–15
- Day 3: 3:16–21
- Day 4: 3:22–30
- Day 5: 3:31–36
SESSION BIG IDEA
Since Jesus has come to reveal himself as the Messiah through signs, the miracles he performs and the claims he makes give us evidence on which to base our decision to follow him or reject him.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO

Why does timing matter to God?

What role does our obedience play in God acting on our behalf?

In what ways do we make God a means to our own selfish end?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Do you see Christianity as boring, rule-following drudgery, or a feast of joy? Why?

Why is it important for us to obey, even when we don't understand God's methods or plan?

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity to complete before next week.

Memorize: Choose a verse from Revelation 19:6–9, Revelation 21:1–5, or Isaiah 25:6–9 to memorize and meditate upon this week.

Discuss: Spend time with a friend and discuss your experience of Christianity and a relationship with Jesus. Do you view your faith as drudgery? Or do you experience it as a feast?

Journal: Are there ways you may be making God a means to an end, rather than your end goal? How might you be missing out on true worship by using him for your own gain? Journal what true fellowship and friendship with God could look like in your life.

BIBLE STUDY NOTES: JOHN 2:1–25

Notes

READING PLAN

Week 3
☐ Day 1: 3:1–8
☐ Day 2: 3:9–15
☐ Day 3: 3:16–21
☐ Day 4: 3:22–30
☐ Day 5: 3:31–36
SESSION 4:
JOHN 3:1–36

Quick Start

READ
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

PRINT
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: When we realize we are the recipients of new spiritual birth in Christ, we begin to understand that eternal life with him starts now.

Head Change: To understand that our sin has been exchanged for Christ’s righteousness.

Heart Change: To feel thankful that Christ came not to condemn us, but to save us.

Life Change: To continually point to Jesus as our source, rather than exalt ourselves.

READ
John 3:1–36

WATCH
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

What qualifies a person to enter the Kingdom of God?

What provision has God given us for eternal life?

What is the great transfer of New Birth?

Show Session 4: John 3:1–36 (11 minutes)

DISCUSS
Nicodemus was a prominent Pharisee, a teacher of Israel. After seeing Jesus’s signs and hearing his claims, Nicodemus sought to have a deeper conversation with Jesus. But as Tony said, Jesus had to explain true religion, and Nicodemus didn’t even understand the conversation.

OPEN
Was there a certain subject matter you struggled to grasp in high school or college? What was it? Why was it difficult to understand?

Did you ever come to a place of understanding? Who helped you understand?

Today, we’ll meet a man called Nicodemus. He was a teacher of Israel, a Pharisee who prided himself on knowing the Jewish laws inside and out, however, he struggled to understand a vital truth that Jesus taught him.
What reasons might Nicodemus have for coming to see Jesus during the night? (Being a Pharisee, he may have wanted to avoid being seen with Jesus after Jesus caused such a stir in the Temple; maybe he was embarrassed for not understanding the Kingdom of Heaven when he was supposed to be leading Israel.)

How does Nicodemus address Jesus? What does this say about who he thinks Jesus is? (“Rabbi.” He believes Jesus to be a teacher from God.)

Jesus cuts straight to the chase. How does he respond to Nicodemus? (“Unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”)

Clearly, Jesus’s response confuses Nicodemus even more. Thinking in literal, natural terms, he cannot imagine an old man entering a second time into his mother’s womb to be reborn. But Jesus has something different in mind.

**PEEK AT THE GREEK**

The word translated “born” in verse 6 comes from the Greek verb *gennaó* and means, “to be generated or given birth to.” The verb is passive for the one being born, meaning the action is not on the offspring’s part. Like a baby does nothing to assist with his or her own birth, we are passive agents in our spiritual rebirth. Natural birth and spiritual birth are both dependent on God. The Spirit bursts in to our hearts and lives and starts a relationship—his Spirit with ours.

**Read John 3:5–7.**

What two components are required for this new birth? (Water and the Spirit.)

In session three, we learned about water that Jesus turned to wine. The water had been used for purification and cleansing in Jewish rituals. When Jesus brings up water in relation to the new birth, we should draw the connection back to the water of purification.

Jesus points Nicodemus back to the Old Testament Jewish rituals of cleansing and purification. In order for a person to see the Kingdom of God and be born again, washing is required.

**GO DEEPER**

Learn more about the significance of the New Birth from the following passages: *Ezekiel 36:25–27; Titus 3:4–5; 2 Corinthians 5:17*

What does God promise his people in Ezekiel 36:25? (To sprinkle clean water on them and cleanse them from their idols.)

What types of idols do people need to be cleansed of today? (Finances; schedules; relationships; anything put in the place of God.)

What does he promise to do in verses 26–27? (He will give them a new heart and remove their heart of stone. He will put his Spirit in them and cause them to obey him.)

In what ways have you seen God give you a new heart and new desires?

God makes a staggering promise to his people who lived in the darkness of their idolatry. He promises to cleanse them and give them a new spirit, with new desires. Ultimately, he promises to give them his Spirit. They will be born again into new people.

**Where do you see evidence and language of the “New Birth” in Titus 3:4–5?** (God is responsible for saving us; washing of regeneration (or rebirth); Holy Spirit poured out on us.)

**According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, what qualifies a person as a new creation?** (When they are “in Christ.”)

God is the one who initiates and carries out our new birth, delivering us into the Kingdom of Heaven. When we are cleansed by him and receive a new heart, we become new creatures.
New birth makes us a new creation. In John 3 Jesus will explain more about how a person relies on him for new birth.

Read John 3:9–21.

According to these verses, what did God not send his Son to do? (Condemn the world.)

Jesus once again compares himself to light, coming into darkness. How does the world respond to the light? (The people loved the darkness rather than the light.)

What ways can you think of that people choose to love the darkness more than they love the light? What sins do people hold on to, or have a difficult time letting go of?

Consider your own perspective of Jesus. Do you approach him as though he will condemn you for your sin? In what specific ways does some part of you still avoid or run from him?

Do you have the habit of bringing your sin into Jesus’s light? What might that look like?

PEEK AT THE GREEK

The word translated “darkness” in verse 19 comes from the Greek noun skotos, which gives the picture of blackness and obscurity, whether physical or moral. It is used in other parts of Scripture as a metaphor for ignorance and blindness. When Jesus talks about people living in darkness, he references their blindness and their choice to live in blurry ignorance. Similar to this Greek word is the word for “nighttime,” used earlier in John 3. Nuktos, nighttime, also refers to metaphorical darkness, blindness, or sleep. It’s fitting that Nicodemus came to Jesus under cover of darkness. He himself still remained in the dark, blind to new birth and the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus, the light, is the only one who can brighten our darkened hearts and give us sight and new birth.

As Tony shared with us, Jesus provided Nicodemus an illustration that he would be familiar with, taken from the Old Testament, to further explain how one comes to be “in Christ”—Moses and the serpent in the wilderness.

In the same way that the serpent was lifted up for people to look to and live (see Numbers 21:4–9), Jesus will be lifted up on a cross as God’s provision for us. When a person looks to Christ as his or her Savior and believes in him, he or she is healed. This is the way new birth happens.

Tony talked about a great transfer that happens at the moment of new birth. What is the great transfer? (God takes our sin and exchanges it for his righteousness. It makes us acceptable to him.)
Where does this righteousness come from?
(Verse 21—“his works have been carried out in God.” Jesus accomplishes a perfect life on our behalf. His righteousness is given to us. He himself accomplishes the standard for us.)

Read John 3:22–36.

In this passage, we come upon a conversation between John the Baptist and his disciples. As John the Baptist talks about Jesus, he confirms everything Jesus told Nicodemus about the new birth.

Why are John the Baptist’s disciples concerned?
(All the people are going to Jesus, rather than John, to be baptized.)

How might the act of Jesus baptizing someone be connected to the new birth?
(It points again to the picture of cleansing. Jesus, not any natural water, is our ultimate cleansing. He is the water of the new birth.)

In verse 27, John the Baptist says that a person can’t receive anything unless it is given to them from heaven. How does this connect to Jesus’s words about new birth?
(God must initiate new birth. None of us are the active participants in new birth. We are the passive recipients of it.)

What does this truth mean about your own salvation?
(God had to initiate it.)

What does John say about his importance when compared to Jesus’s importance?
(Jesus must become greater; I must become less.)

Is this evident in your own life? Are you increasing, or decreasing? How is Christ becoming greater in your life?

At the beginning of the session, Tony reminded us that there are only two kinds of religion in the world—“one religion tells you what you must do to make yourself acceptable to God, but the other tells what God has done to make you acceptable to him.” In what ways could you be trying to cling to your own efforts for salvation, rather than looking to Christ?

What does John say about how a person gets eternal life in verse 36?
(“He who believes in the Son has eternal life.”)

Eternal life is not merely something that begins after we leave this life. Rather, it is a quality of life that begins now, as the supernatural invades our lives. Jesus is offering us eternal life—relationship with him—that can begin at this moment. All we need to do to possess it is look to his cross in faith and receive the righteousness he wants to give us.

How are you currently experiencing a taste of the quality of eternal life Jesus offers—in your relationship with him, in your connection with others, in your work, etc.?
LAST WORD

Nicodemus didn’t understand the way the Kingdom of God worked. He thought it would come by ritual and religion. But Jesus turned his world upside down when he spoke about being born again, by water (cleansing and purifying) and the Spirit (God putting a new heart and new desires in us.)

Those who are born again come out of darkness and blindness. They love the light, and know that it is only by Christ’s righteousness that they have been given entrance into the Kingdom. Like John the Baptist, they don’t hold up their own merits or effort, but they point to Jesus and say, “He must become greater.”

Jesus invites us to experience eternal life, which begins now. Because we have relationship with him and access to him, the supernatural breaks into our lives in the present, and will continue to transform us on into eternity.

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

Memorize: Choose a verse from Ezekiel 36:25–27, Titus 3:4–5, or 2 Corinthians 5:17 to memorize and meditate upon this week.

Create: Create a “birth book” for your walk with God. Write a journal entry about the day you experienced new birth. Where were you? How did Christ open your eyes? How old were you? What were the circumstances? Feel free to add pictures and friends’ memories. Keep the book as a sort of scrapbook, continuing to log the significant experiences you have in your relationship with Christ throughout the years.

Journal: Are you experiencing eternal life in the present? In what ways have you seen God break in and transform your life?

READING PLAN

Leader: In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

Week 4
☐ Day 1: 4:1–15
☐ Day 2: 4:16–26
☐ Day 3: 4:27–38
☐ Day 4: 4:39–45
☐ Day 5: 4:46–54
SESSION BIG IDEA
When we realize we are the recipients of new spiritual birth in Christ, we begin to understand that eternal life with him starts now.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO

What qualifies a person to enter the Kingdom of God?

What provision has God given us for eternal life?

What is the great transfer of New Birth?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

In what ways could you be trying to cling to your own efforts for salvation, rather than looking to Christ?

How are you currently experiencing a taste of the quality of eternal life Jesus offers—in your relationship with him, in your connection with others, in your work, etc.?

LIVE IT OUT

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Journal: Are you experiencing eternal life in the present? In what ways have you seen God break in and transform your life?

READING PLAN

Week 4
- Day 1: 4:1–15
- Day 2: 4:16–26
- Day 3: 4:27–38
- Day 4: 4:39–45
- Day 5: 4:46–54
SESSION 5:
JOHN 4:1–5:18

Quick Start

READ
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

PRINT
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Because Jesus offers to quench our thirst, we can find true healing and satisfaction through belief in him.

Head Change: To understand that true worship is belief in his name.

Heart Change: To feel satisfaction by his living presence within us at all times.

Life Change: To choose active faith as a response to Jesus’s offer of healing.

READ
John 4:1–5:18

WATCH
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

In what ways does Jesus cross human boundaries?

What characterizes Jesus’s word?

What role do we play in our own healing?

Show Session 5: John 4:1–5:18 (10 minutes)

DISCUSS
In John 4, we see Jesus in the midst of a journey from Judea to Galilee. On the way, he passes through Samaria, a place Jews typically avoided because of the intense political and racial conflicts. Jews regarded Samaritans with low esteem.

OPEN
What is the thirstiest you have ever been? How did you get to that point? Where were you?

How did you find water and quench your thirst? Have you ever tried to quench your thirst with something besides water? How did that turn out?

Water is required on the most basic level for our survival. But it seems that sometimes, we don’t always thirst after it until we’re in dire need of it. In today’s passage, we meet a thirsty woman who has a conversation with Jesus about water and her thirst.
What caused Jesus to leave Judea? (He had heard that the Pharisees knew he was baptizing more disciples than John.)

Why might this have caused Jesus to leave?

According to verse 4, what route was necessary to get to Galilee? (He had to pass through Samaria.)

**PEEK AT THE GREEK**

We read in John 4:4 that Jesus “had to pass through Samaria.” In actuality, Jesus did not have to pass through Samaria to get to Galilee—the Jews had an alternate road that bypassed Samaria. The phrase translated “had to” in verse 4 comes from the Greek verb *dei* and means “inevitable” or “necessary.” It’s the same word used when Jesus said it is “necessary to be born again” to enter the Kingdom, or when John the Baptist said that it was “necessary for Jesus to increase.” When John writes that it was necessary for Jesus to pass through Samaria, he was referring to God’s plan: it was necessary for Jesus to meet this woman at the well, so she might be brought to a saving relationship with the Savior. Further, this divine appointment was necessary so her entire town could enter into God’s plan for faith and salvation. John 4 gives us a beautiful picture of the way our God goes out of his way, past what is efficient, to pursue his people.

In Samaria, Jesus sits beside Jacob’s well, and a woman approaches to draw water.

What does it say about Jesus that he is willing to not only pass through Samaria, but to engage a Samaritan woman in personal conversation?

Tony pointed out that Jesus steps into the conflict and crosses the racial, gender, social, and political boundaries in place. Human constraints and separation do not hinder the Son of God’s purpose.

Jesus displays his willingness to meet an outsider on common ground. **What does this imply about how his followers should engage the world around them?** (Followers of Jesus are to follow this example and engage any and every person, regardless of race, political ideal, social demographic, or gender.)

**What boundaries might we consciously or inadvertently allow to constrain our relationships with others?** (Social status, race, political party, income, appearance, etc.)

Do you think those in the Church are quick to cross boundaries, or slow to initiate towards outsiders? Why?

Tony said, “A lot of times Christians want to save a person’s soul, while avoiding the rest of their lives, not treating them as persons.” **What is one specific thing you could do this week to cross a boundary toward someone society would consider an “outsider”?**

Jesus demonstrates powerfully that the Kingdom of God does not adhere to the boundaries sinful humans establish.

**Read John 4:5–26.**

What time of day is the woman drawing water? What can you infer about her from this observation? (She is there at noon, in the heat of the day. We can assume she goes to great lengths to avoid people.)
After reading the account, what do we learn about this woman’s life? Why is she avoiding people? (She has had five husbands, and is currently with a man who is not her husband; she probably lives in shame and rejection; she likely has a reputation.)

Jesus engages her and asks for a drink of water. But he also tells her that she should be the one asking him for a drink of water.

What kind of water does Jesus offer her? (Living water.)

The woman, likely imagining a way to further avoid and escape the discomfort of having to engage with people and continually draw water, is eager to know more about this Living Water that would quench her thirst forever. But Jesus has something far greater in mind.

In what ways can we end up acting like the Samaritan woman, missing the grander picture of what God has for us and simply searching for immediate fixes to temporary problems? Can you think of a specific example in your life?

Go Deeper
Learn more about the Living Water from the following passages: John 7:37–39; Isaiah 55:1–3; Jeremiah 2:13; Revelation 22:1–2, 17

What does Jesus cry out to the crowds in John 7? (“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.”)

According to verse 38, what follows belief in Jesus? (When a person believes in Jesus, living water will flow out of his or her heart.)

What is this “living water” that flows out of a person’s heart? (The Holy Spirit.)

When a person believes on Jesus, the Holy Spirit himself takes up residence in that person’s life, flowing a steady river of comfort, wisdom, and presence.

What invitation is issued in Isaiah 55? (Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, buy without price.)

Isaiah 55:2 asks why the people spend their money and labor for things that don’t satisfy. What types of things do you see people trying to fill up on or quench their soul thirst with today?

How does a person live, according to Isaiah 55:3? (Come to the Lord, incline your ear and hear.)

We are invited to a feast of rich food and drink that truly satisfies. But all too often, we reject the nourishing soul feast for cheap substitutes.

What does God call himself in Jeremiah 2:13? (The fountain of living waters.)

We are accused of hewing out broken cisterns for ourselves, similar to the way we feast on cheap substitutes. What are some broken cisterns you personally continue to run to? Do they truly satisfy your soul?

In Revelation 22, we find the source of this water. From where does the water of life flow? (From the throne of God and of the Lamb.)

What is the invitation issued in verse 17? (“Come.”)

What would it look like for you to come to the table God sets for you continually?
The living water that our souls thirst for is free, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. He knows it will satisfy us and quench our deepest longings. When we believe in him, he puts his Spirit, this living water, inside our hearts. We never have to seek out a substitute well again.

Read John 4:27–45.

According to verse 28, what does the Samaritan woman do after talking with Jesus? (She leaves her water jar and goes back into town to tell the people.)

This is an amazing statement. This woman, marked by rejection and a reputation, leaves her water jar. She abandons the false way she satisfies her soul after talking with Jesus. Even more amazing, she goes to seek out the very people she has been avoiding to tell them about Jesus.

How can you abandon the false cisterns you run to and find your satisfaction in what Jesus offers? What would it look like for you to “leave your water jar”?

What does the woman say to the people in the town? (“Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did.”)

Come and see. It’s the same invitation Jesus issued to the disciples, and that Philip said to Nathanael. Now the Samaritan woman invites others to come and experience for themselves.

What is the result of the woman’s testimony? (Many Samaritans believed.)

Your testimony is powerful. God uses your experience of meeting Jesus to draw others to him.

What is your story of meeting Jesus? Are you comfortable sharing it with others? Why or why not?

Who is one person you could share your testimony with this week?

Look at verse 42. What begins to happen to the people? (Their belief is a result of their own experience, not just her word.)

As many Samaritans believe in Jesus, we see the irony of the situation. The “outsiders” receive the Messiah more readily and completely than the Jewish “insiders.” The “outsiders” see, and the “insiders” remain blind.

Read John 4:46–54.

What request does the official make of Jesus? (To come down and heal his son, who was dying.)

Does Jesus act in the way the official requested? (Jesus does not go with the official, but tells him that his son will live.)

What is the official’s response to Jesus’s word? (He believed.)

Tony asked a pointed question in his teaching. Jesus became frustrated at the way the people needed further signs in order to believe. As Tony put it, “How much more does he need to do for you to believe?”

Reflect on your own heart. What else does Jesus need to do for you to trust him? Has he done enough for you to believe, or not? Why?
Read John 5:1–18.

How long had the man by the pool been an invalid? (38 years.)

What does Jesus ask him? (“Do you want to be healed?”)

**PEEK AT THE GREEK**
The word translated “healed” in John 5:6 comes from the Greek verb *hugiainō* and means, “well.” It means to be in good health and proper working order, functioning holistically. While not all of us deal with a physical infirmity like the man by the pool in John 5, all of us are affected by sin and dysfunction in our souls. Each of us is in need of healing. Jesus asks a profound question when he inquires, “Do you want to be healed?” The man in John 5 seemed to prefer his infirmity to healing. It’s an important question we must each answer when confronted by Jesus. He is ready to heal us on a soul level. Do you want to be healed?

Think for a moment on your own life. As Tony asked, where do you feel defeated by sin or circumstances? What kinds of sin might you be holding on to?

Why is it sometimes more comfortable to hold on to the sin and dysfunction in our lives, rather than move toward healing?

What is the nature of the invalid’s response? (He responds to Jesus with excuses.)

What excuses do people fall back on for staying in their sin and dysfunction?

Tony emphasized active faith over passive faith. What action might God be asking you to take to participate in his healing plan for your life?

After Jesus heals the man at the pool, with what issue are the Jews preoccupied? (He healed him on the Sabbath.)

Jesus makes the unmistakable claim that he is equal to the Father. His answer to the Jews is that he is Lord of the Sabbath, the true rest they long to experience. Rather than finding rest by keeping rules, we experience rest from our striving because Jesus has accomplished a perfect life for us.

Where in your life do you long to experience rest?
What might it look like to experience the rest Jesus offers this week? How could you take steps to enter into that rest?

LAST WORD

Jesus continues to shake up the Jews’ understanding of their Messiah, as he repeatedly crosses racial, social, and political boundaries to engage both “insiders” and “outsiders.” While the “insiders” reject him, the “outsiders” believe him, showing that his Kingdom has no bounds.

In talking with the Samaritan woman, Jesus extended the offer of living water. While the woman had been attempting to satisfy her soul’s thirst in a variety of ways, Jesus told her that belief in him would give her access to a fountain springing forth in her heart (the Holy Spirit.)

The official believed Jesus’s word was powerful enough to heal his son, and when confronted with the question, “Do you want to be healed?” the invalid had to learn active faith and that healing was better than staying stuck in his sin. Jesus not only healed his body but also offered him a healed heart.

Tony concluded, “In all three of these scenarios [the woman at the well, the nobleman’s son, and the man by the pool], it was his Word that made the difference. So, that ought to tell us all, hold close to his Word. Because when it is let loose, it is life-transforming.”

Are you holding on to Jesus’s Word?

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

Pray: Ask God to reveal the boundaries and categories you live by. Are you refusing to engage people who are different than you? Ask him to help you and give you opportunities to engage with those on the fringes of society.

Memorize: Memorize and meditate upon Jeremiah 2:13 this week.

Discuss: Spend time with a friend and practice sharing your testimonies with each other. The more you share your story of your experience with Jesus, the more comfortable and ready you will be to share with others.

READING PLAN

Leader: In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

Week 5

- **Day 1:** 5:1–9
- **Day 2:** 5:10–18
- **Day 3:** 5:19–24
- **Day 4:** 5:25–29
- **Day 5:** 5:30–47
SESSION BIG IDEA
Because Jesus offers to quench our thirst, we can find true healing and satisfaction through belief in him.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO
In what ways does Jesus cross human boundaries?

What characterizes Jesus’s word?

What role do we play in our own healing?

PERSONAL REFLECTION
What would it look like for you to “leave your water jar”? How can you abandon the false cisterns you run to and find your satisfaction in what Jesus offers?

What else does Jesus need to do for you to trust him? Has he done enough for you to believe, or not? Why?

LIVE IT OUT
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BIBLE STUDY NOTES: JOHN 4:1–5:18
Notes

READING PLAN
Week 5
Day 1: 5:1–9
Day 2: 5:10–18
Day 3: 5:19–24
Day 4: 5:25–29
Day 5: 5:30–47
SESSION 6: JOHN 5:19–6:21

Quick Start

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PRINT
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WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader's Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Because Jesus demonstrates his equality with God through his miraculous signs, we can trust him to be sufficient for our every need.

Head Change: To understand we have a choice of meeting him as Savior or Judge.

Heart Change: To feel at peace because he has provided forgiveness for us, walks with us, and tells us not to be afraid.

Life Change: To rely on Jesus no matter the situation or crisis we are in, because he is able to deliver.

READ
John 5:19–6:21

WATCH
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

Who and what bears witness to the validity of Jesus’s claims of equality with God?

How does the whole Bible point to Jesus?

What is revealed about God’s sufficiency through Jesus?

OPEN
What is the wildest claim you ever heard anyone make? Did someone claim to run a three-minute mile? Try to convince you they saw Big Foot? Promise they met a famous actor?

Were you inclined to believe them, or be skeptical? Why?

Would evidence have changed your mind one way or the other? Why or why not?

In John 6, Jesus makes a staggering claim to be equal to God. But even when he lays evidence before them, the Jews are slow to believe.

DISCUSS
As we saw in the last session, after Jesus healed the invalid by the pool, the Jews were angry that he had healed on the Sabbath. Jesus had just made the staggering claim that he was equal with God. In this session, we see him continue to explain himself.
According to verse 18, how are the actions of the Father and the Son correlated? (The Son does what he sees the Father doing, and what the Father does, the Son does likewise.)

How does the Father feel about the Son? (He loves the Son and shows him everything he's doing.)

What is the purpose of the greater works that he will eventually show? (So we may marvel.)

What is a person’s relationship to the Father if they do not honor the Son? (Verse 23—“whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.”)

How does a person pass from death to life? (By hearing and believing.)

Jesus displays in the physical what the Father does in the spiritual. Sharing the nature of the Father, Jesus has complete equality with God.

What kind of relationship do you feel like you have with Jesus? What about with the Father? Are they different? What’s different about the way you relate to either?

Have you ever encountered a person who believes in God, but doesn’t want to claim belief in Jesus? What could you say to address that view with this person?

What does verse 27 tell us about Jesus’s authority? (He has authority to execute judgment.)

Tony named a difficult reality when he said, “Jesus can be your Savior or he can be your judge. But you must choose which one he is.” Have you made the choice whether you want Jesus to be your Savior or judge? What’s the danger in attempting to be neutral toward him?

Read John 5:30–47.

What would render Jesus’s testimony untrue, according to verse 31? (If he alone bears witness about himself.)

Who and what else bears witness about Jesus’s testimony? (John the Baptist; Jesus’s own signs and works; the Father; the Scriptures.)

PEEK AT THE GREEK
The word translated “witness” in verses 31, 36, and 37 comes from the Greek verb martureó and means “testify, give witness.” It signifies the way a person brings forward evidence to support a claim. When Jesus talks about those who bear witness to his equality with God, he cites the evidence that supports his claim. John the Baptist announced Jesus as the Messiah, calling him the Son of God. Jesus’s own signs give credence to what he is saying about himself. God the Father spoke at Jesus’s baptism, calling Jesus his beloved Son. And all of Scripture points to Jesus. In this passage, Jesus calls upon these “witnesses” to stack up the evidence that he is indeed equal to God.
How does Scripture bear witness about Jesus? (All of Scripture is ultimately about Jesus—from Genesis, when God first promises an offspring who will crush the serpent’s head, to Revelation, when Jesus arrives as the Bridegroom in the Wedding Feast, the story is all about him, from beginning to end.) Tony shared, “The whole Bible is either in anticipation of Jesus or in fulfillment of Jesus.” Have you read your Bible through this lens before? Why or why not? Is this a new perspective for you?

What’s one way in which you could begin to approach Scripture with an eye looking for Jesus, either in anticipation or fulfillment?

According to this passage, is it possible to know the Scripture well, but still miss the point? What could you do to protect yourself from that mistake?

Jesus expresses sorrow at the way the Jews refused to come to him. He saw them, hungry for glory, but missing the very glory in front of them.

Rather than seeking glory from God, what were the Jews doing, according to verse 44? (Receiving glory from one another.) Things haven’t changed very much. Most people have this same inclination—to receive glory from each other rather than seek God’s glory.

What are some ways people today receive glory from one another, rather than God? (Consider empty praise, accomplishments, narcissism, social media, celebrities, musicians, movie stars, sporting events, etc.)

In what ways might you be seeking to receive glory from fellow humans? Why?

What would it look like to stop seeking glory from others? What areas in your life would need to change?

With the Jews still reeling in anger at Jesus’s healing on the Sabbath and the exposure of their hardened hearts, Jesus continued to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, where a crowd will witness his next sign.


When Jesus tests Philip, what is Philip’s response? (“Two hundred denarii would not be enough for each person to get a little.”)
What does this display about the way Philip was thinking? (He was thinking in limited, natural, human, logical terms.)

Do you ever approach God with the same limited, human, logical terms? In what areas of your life are you tempted to limit his power?

Andrew’s frame of reference isn’t much different than Philip’s. He points out that a small boy has five barley loaves and two fish, but says, “What are they for so many?”

Jesus displays his power and limitless resources when he multiplies the bread and fish.

Was everyone fed? How much? (“As much as they wanted...they ate their fill.”)

Have you ever experienced God doing far more with your limited abilities or resources than you imagined? How? What happened?

In case there was any doubt at the miracle, Jesus provided more than enough. Not only does he provide enough, but he provides more than enough. To drive the point home, he overprovides by precisely twelve baskets—one for each of his disciples.

Perhaps God has not multiplied your resources or abilities. But he promises that he himself is more than enough for us. How have you experienced God himself being more than enough for you?

How did that experience transform and grow your faith?

What did it display about God’s sufficiency? What does it say about human insufficiency?

Tony talked about giving thanks for our insufficiency, because God is our sufficiency. How can you thank God for your insufficiency today? How does doing so transform your perspective and mindset in the face of insufficiency?

God himself is our Generous Provider, meeting the needs of our insufficiency in his deep compassion. Whether it’s bread on a mountainside, or a Lamb’s blood at Passover, God overflows sufficiency and demonstrates he is more than enough.

The crowds were in a celebratory uproar after seeing the astonishing miracle. Before things escalated too quickly, Jesus withdrew, while his disciples boarded a boat to cross the sea.

Read John 6:16–21.

The sea was rough that night, waves chopping with a strong wind.

After rowing three or four miles on a rough sea against a strong wind, what do you imagine the disciples were feeling as they saw Jesus walking on the water? (Fatigue, exhaustion, fear, anxiety.)
Jesus speaks to them in their fear. **What words does he say to them?** (“It is I; do not be afraid.”)

**In your life, how affected are you by fear?**

Has fear ever been your response, even after you have just seen God provide and show his sufficiency in a prior situation? Why did you react that way?

**GO DEEPER**

Learn more about the profound words Jesus spoke to comfort his disciples as he walked on water from the following passages: *Exodus 3:13–14; Isaiah 41:1–10; Isaiah 43:1–2*

**When Moses first encounters God in Exodus 3 and asks God his name, what does God say to Moses?** (“I AM WHO I AM.”)

Jesus’s greeting to his disciples on the stormy sea mimics God’s identification for himself. Essentially, he says to his disciples, “It is I AM.”

**What might have come to the disciples’ minds to hear such a greeting?** (They would have been reminded of Moses, of the name Yahweh gave himself and was identified by among the Jewish people.)

Jesus’s words are meant to once again establish his equality with God. He is saying, “I AM God.”

**How is John 6 reminiscent of Isaiah 41?** (Both tell us to “Fear not.” Both establish his authority over everything, even the sea.)

**What specific scenarios does Isaiah 43 give, indicating that the Savior would be with his people in the midst of?** (“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.”)

Isaiah calls Israel to remember their Exodus, when God delivered them from Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea. He points toward the second Exodus, when their Savior would come to deliver them from the deep waters of their sin. This picture is seen quite literally in John 6. As his disciples passed through stormy waters, they were not overwhelmed or consumed because their Savior delivered them through the waters. God’s presence was with them. This is true for us in any situation—because Jesus has come to deliver us from our sins, when the storms of life threaten to consume us, he will be with us.

**How does God identify himself in Isaiah 43:3?** (“I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”)

The Savior is the Lord, the I AM, the Holy One of Israel, arrived to be present through our trials.

**What difference does God’s presence make in your life as you go through trials?**

Since Jesus has delivered you eternally from the waters of judgment, what does that mean for the trials you will go through during your lifetime? How does it adjust your perspective?
Have you experienced a personal “rough sea” or fearful trial in your life? How did God make his presence known to you during that time?

LAST WORD

Jesus is crystal clear in his claim to be equal to God. As he explains the way he shares the nature of the Father and has the authority to judge all humanity, the furious Jews are exposed as having missed the point of all of Scripture.

Demonstrating his authority further, Jesus also displays deep compassion, abounding generosity, and complete sufficiency when he multiplies a few loaves of bread and fish to feed a multitude. He provides for us and shows that he is not only enough, he is more than enough for us.

Meeting his exhausted disciples on a stormy sea, Jesus reminds them of his identity, essentially saying, “It is I AM. Don’t be afraid.” Because Jesus is God, come to be our Savior, our biggest fears can be put to rest.

Our Savior is here. Do not fear.

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

Create: Invite some friends over and prepare a meal in your kitchen. Choose ingredients of different colors, textures, and flavors. As you taste and ingest the food, thank God for his provision and marvel at the way he is God over the physical properties of matter.

Discuss: Spend time with a friend and talk about the ways God has delivered you through difficult trials. How have you seen his presence, calming your fear?

Journal: In what ways do you seek to receive glory from other humans, rather than from God alone? How has God shown himself to be more than enough for you?

READING PLAN

Leader: In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

Week 6
- Day 1: 6:1–15
- Day 2: 6:16–21
- Day 3: 6:22–34
- Day 4: 6:35–59
- Day 5: 6:60–71
SESSION 6 HANDOUT:
JOHN 5:19–6:21

SESSION BIG IDEA
Because Jesus demonstrates his equality with God through his miraculous signs, we can trust him to be sufficient for our every need.

PERSONAL REFLECTION
Have you made the choice whether you want Jesus to be your Savior or judge? What’s the danger in attempting to be neutral toward him?

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO
Who and what bears witness to the validity of Jesus’s claims of equality with God?

What would it look like to stop seeking glory from others? What areas in your life would need to change?

How does the whole Bible point to Jesus?

LIVE IT OUT
Select at least one activity to complete before next week.

Create: Invite some friends over and prepare a meal in your kitchen. Choose ingredients of different colors, textures, and flavors. As you taste and ingest the food, thank God for his provision, and marvel at the way he is God over the physical properties of matter.

Discuss: Spend time with a friend and talk about the ways God has delivered you through difficult trials. How have you seen his presence, calming your fear?

Journal: In what ways do you seek to receive glory from other humans, rather than from God alone? How has God shown himself to be more than enough for you?

BIBLE STUDY NOTES: JOHN 6:19–6:21

Notes

READING PLAN
Week 6
☐ Day 1: 6:1–15
☐ Day 2: 6:16–21
☐ Day 3: 6:22–34
☐ Day 4: 6:35–59
☐ Day 5: 6:60–71
SESSION 7:
JOHN 6:22–71

Quick Start

READ
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

PRINT
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: If we view Jesus as the ultimate treasure, we can find true satisfaction in him.

Head Change: To know that Jesus is not a means to satisfying our longing, but the satisfaction itself.

Heart Change: To feel energized with life and vitality at the satisfaction He gives us.

Life Change: To stop depleting our resources and energy in our attempts to satisfy ourselves and freely receive the nourishing life Jesus offers us.

OPEN
Have you ever experienced what many refer to as “hanger” (the state of being angry because you are so hungry)?

What is the hungriest you have ever been?

What did you eat to finally satisfy your appetite and nourish your body?

READ
John 6:22–71

WATCH
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

What had the Jews turned Jesus into?

What are God’s gifts meant to reveal?

Why do some of the Jews leave Jesus?

Show Session 7: John 6:22–71 (11 minutes)

DISCUSS
Once the crowds realized Jesus was gone, they began to seek him again. What motive does Jesus expose for their seeking him? (“Not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”)

The crowds were enamored with Jesus, not for who he was, but for his miracles and the things he could give them. As Tony put it, they wanted goodies from God, but they didn’t want God himself.
What experiences or things do you think people seek from Jesus today? How do they make Jesus a means to an end? (Health, wealth, blessings, relationships or marriage, the “American Dream,” safety, etc.)

What might you be seeking from Jesus beyond Jesus himself? Is there anything you’re hoping for that, if you didn’t get it, would cause you to be angry with God or consider abandoning him altogether?

Tony said, “Whenever the physical, bountiful goodness of God becomes an end in itself, it becomes idolatry.” Christ must be our deepest desire and joy. If he isn’t, we’re just using him as a way to get to something else. In our sin, we often make him a means to our own end. It’s a constant struggle. But Jesus wants to continue revealing himself so that we find him more beautiful and desirable than anything else as we continue to walk with him.

Is using Jesus as a means to your own end a new idea or conviction for you? How might knowing that Jesus longs to be your deepest desire alter your perspective on what it means to follow Jesus?

What does it look like to make Jesus our chief goal, or deepest joy, in our daily life?

Read John 6:27.

We live in a consumeristic culture. The world tells us that any number of products, experiences, or an elevated social status will satisfy us and eliminate our discontent.

Most people can point to any number of experiences or products that they chase after to fulfill themselves. Our culture programs us to do this nearly automatically, fueled by sophisticated advertising.

What examples of experiences, material things, or elevated status can you personally think of that you have hoped would satisfy you in the past week? (Buying a new device or phone; taking a vacation; selling a home; getting a makeover; receiving a promotion; going on a date, etc.)

What does Jesus call these types of things in verse 27? (Food that perishes.)

In what ways do people work for or labor for this kind of perishable food? (Spend their energy, emotions, time, money, and resources on surface-level things.)

In your experience, have any of these things ever truly satisfied your soul in a lasting way? Why or why not?
The world compels us to spend all we have and wring ourselves out to obtain its goods—experiences, material items, and titles. But none of them truly satisfy the ache of emptiness and discontentment. It’s why we continually have to go back for more. We spend our money, time, and energy hoping to be satisfied by the latest device, the newest home, and the most exotic vacation. Then we compare ourselves to others, which further fuels our discontentment.

It’s as if we’re famished, and seeking to answer our hunger with a bag of chips or a candy bar.

Read John 6:28–34.

How do the people respond to Jesus’s words in verses 30–31? (“What sign will you do? Our fathers gave us manna in the wilderness.”)

What is ironic about their answer? (Jesus had just performed a sign for them on the mountain by multiplying fish and loaves of bread to feed 5,000 people. They point to manna, the bread from heaven in the wilderness, but fail to connect that Jesus also gave them literal bread from heaven.)

In the last session, we talked about looking for Jesus in all of Scripture. Tony explained that all Scripture is either in anticipation of or in fulfillment of Jesus. We can practice this as we consider the account of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness and being given manna from heaven. (Reference Exodus 16 for this account, if necessary.)

What did the manna from heaven show the people about God? (He is compassionate and provides for their needs.)

What does it tell us about God that he sent his Son for sinners? (He is loving and provides the forgiveness and atonement necessary to provide for our eternal security.)

How does the story of manna in the wilderness actually point to Jesus? (God provided for his people’s hunger and sustenance in the wilderness by sending manna. Now, God provides the nourishment for his people’s souls by sending Jesus.)

Both the manna in the wilderness and Jesus’s multiplied bread and fish were physical signs meant to communicate a deeper spiritual reality: Jesus is the ultimate provision for us in the wilderness of our sin. He is the bread that will satisfy our souls.

Read John 6:35–40.

What does Jesus call himself? (“I am the Bread of Life.”)

PEEK AT THE GREEK

The word translated “life” in verse 35 comes from the Greek noun τὸ ζῶον. It describes an absolute fullness of vitality and carries a connotation of genuine happiness. This is the same word used to describe the kind of life that was in Jesus, the Word, in John 1:4 (“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”), and the same word used a few chapters later, when Jesus says in John 10:10, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” When Jesus calls himself the Bread of ζῶον, he is telling us that he is the source of all fullness, vitality, and happiness. When we receive him, he provides us with this kind of life, both now and in eternity. Revelation 21 and 22 talk about the River of Life and Tree of Life, using the same word. In Christ, we are invited from our famished, weak existence, into the experience of life to the full, which starts now and never ends.

What claim does Jesus make about the one who has this Bread? (“Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”)

If you were truly feasting on the Bread of Life, Jesus, what do you think would change about your appetite for the “bread that perishes?”
In what ways have you experienced satisfaction in Christ?

If someone wasn’t sure how to experience this satisfaction by feasting on the Bread of Life, how would you teach them to experience it? What can a person do to be satisfied in God?

Unlike the cheap, filler substitutes that the world tries to sell us for consumption, Jesus is the real substance that our souls were made to be nourished by. Rather than trying to appease our hunger with chips and candy, we experience a five-course dinner. When he becomes our deepest desire and greatest joy, we lack nothing. By feasting on him, we are nourished to full life and vitality.

Earlier, we discussed the food that perishes. But Jesus offers an alternative way to obtain the bread of life. According to verse 27, how does a person obtain the bread of life? (The Son of Man will give it.)

How is this a stark contrast from the way a person gets the food that perishes? (We must labor and work for the food that perishes.)

Rather than expend all our energy and resources for an unsatisfying substitute, we only need to look to Jesus in order to freely receive the satisfying substance he offers.

As Tony said, “God wants to feed you...Everything you need in the life to come is provided for by Christ, but everything you need for this life comes from the good hand of a gracious God...Don’t forget the giver while you enjoy the gift.”

What difference would it make in the way you try to fulfill your desires to know that God wants to satisfy them?

What would it look like to enjoy God’s gifts, while enjoying him more than the gift?

How can God’s good gifts be tools to help us love and enjoy God more?

While this bread is free to us, it was also costly. Why can Jesus freely offer us this bread? (He spent all of his resources—his life—to purchase it for us.)
While we must empty ourselves for perishable bread, Jesus depletes himself so we can be satisfied. As we find our deepest joy in Jesus, we feast on Living Bread. We do no work to receive this bread. He gave his life so we can freely receive it.


Why did the Jews dispute among themselves? (They didn’t understand how Jesus could give them his flesh to eat.)

Elsewhere in the Gospels, we read about Jesus celebrating his last Passover meal with his disciples (Luke 22:14–20, Matthew 26:26–28). When he breaks the bread, he says, “This is my body, given for you.” And when he lifts the cup of wine, he says, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; it’s poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

How do these statements clarify what Jesus is saying about eating his flesh and drinking his blood in John 6?

When Jesus tells the Jews they must eat his flesh and drink his blood, he is referring to the symbolism of communion, a picture of trusting the sacrifice of his broken body and shed blood. Though the Jews don’t yet understand what Jesus is talking about in John 6, Jesus is telling them that in order to have eternal life, they must claim Jesus’s death as their own—believe in him as the provision for their sins.

Read John 6:60–69.

Many of the things Jesus says are difficult words to hear. What are some reasons people typically take offense to Jesus today?

Are there specific words of Jesus that you find particularly difficult to bear? Why?

How has God continued to reveal himself to you even in those difficult places where you find it difficult to hear and agree with his words?

What does Peter say to Jesus after Jesus asks him if they are also going to go away? (“To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. You’re the Holy One of God.”)
Have you ever attempted or wanted to leave Christ, but felt his firm hold on your heart? Describe that time in your life.

How did it affect your faith to realize that God will never leave you or change in his unwavering commitment to you?

In what ways has his faithfulness to you deepened your commitment to him?

Jesus offers us the Bread of Life today. He wants to freely give us life and be the Treasure of our Souls. He is not the means, but the end. We were made to be filled by him.

**LIVE IT OUT**

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

**Pray:** Ask God to help you with the difficult words that Jesus speaks. Ask that your heart would not take offense to Jesus. In the places where it’s hard to accept his words, pray that God would continue to reveal his truth to your heart.

**Discuss:** Spend time with a friend and talk about the things, experiences, or status that you are pursuing as a means of satisfaction. What perishable food do you run after to try to satisfy your soul? In what ways can you cease this striving over the next week?

**Journal:** How are you currently making Jesus a means to an end, rather than seeking him as the Treasure itself? What idolatry is living in your heart? What would you be upset about if it was denied to you? What makes Jesus so beautiful and worth being our treasure?

**READING PLAN**

**Leader:** In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

**Week 7**

- **Day 1:** 7:1–13
- **Day 2:** 7:14–24
- **Day 3:** 7:25–31
- **Day 4:** 7:32–39
- **Day 5:** 7:40–52
SESSION BIG IDEA
If we view Jesus as the ultimate treasure, we can find true satisfaction in him.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO

What had the Jews turned Jesus into?

What are God’s gifts meant to reveal?

Why do some of the Jews leave Jesus?

BIBLE STUDY NOTES: JOHN 6:22–71

Notes

PERSONAL REFLECTION
What might you be seeking from Jesus beyond Jesus himself? Is there anything you’re hoping for that, if you didn’t get it, would cause you to be angry with God or consider abandoning him altogether?

In what ways have you experienced satisfaction in Christ?

LIVE IT OUT
Select at least one activity to complete before next week.

Pray: Ask God to help you with the difficult words that Jesus speaks. Ask that your heart would not take offense to Jesus. In the places where it’s hard to accept his words, pray that God would continue to reveal his truth to your heart.

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Journal: How are you currently making Jesus a means to an end, rather than seeking him as the Treasure itself? What idolatry is living in your heart? What would you be upset about if it was denied to you? What makes Jesus so beautiful and worth being our treasure?

READING PLAN

Week 7
- Day 1: 7:1–13
- Day 2: 7:14–24
- Day 3: 7:25–31
- Day 4: 7:32–39
- Day 5: 7:40–52
SESSION 8: JOHN 7:1-52

Quick Start

READ
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PRINT
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WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Because of the claims Jesus makes about himself, we cannot remain neutral, but must decide what we believe to be true about him.

Head Change: To understand that Jesus offers us living water and the transformative work of the Spirit in our souls.

Heart Change: To feel hopeful at God’s transformative work in our souls and those of others around us.

Life Change: To turn from self-righteous hypocrisy and rule-driven legalism to embrace the transformation God offers through the Spirit.

OPEN
Who is the best teacher you have ever had? What did they teach? What methods did they use? What was their personality like? What made them excellent?

What kind of impact did their teaching have on you?

Once in awhile, someone special comes along—a teacher who has a profound impact on the way we view ourselves, others, and the world around us. They may equip us with a new perspective on life or completely alter the trajectory of our path.

For reasons beyond what any other teacher can point to, Jesus was this kind of teacher. When he spoke, everybody was impacted. His words altered perspectives, shook up security, and challenged their hearers.

In this session, we hear Jesus teaching and addressing a crowd of people, and the various reactions these people had to his words.

READ
John 7:1–52

WATCH
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

What three choices do we have about who Jesus is?

What do we learn about God’s timing in this passage?

How do we experience transformation in Christ?

Show Session 8: John 7:1–52 (9 minutes)

DISCUSS
Jesus, in the aftermath of his signs and miracles, is becoming a well-known public figure. But as chapter 7 begins, Jesus makes the decision to stay in Galilee rather than go to Judea.
Why did Jesus not go to Judea? (Because the Jews were seeking to kill him.)

What do we learn about Jesus’s brothers in the first few verses of Chapter 7? (His brothers wanted him to go public; even they did not believe in him.)

What are some probable reasons for Jesus’s brothers’ reluctance to believe in him? (They had grown up with him; he was familiar; they didn’t understand his purpose or who he was; sibling rivalry, etc.)

Jesus’s own brothers don’t even believe him. Tony put it this way: “You can be part of the family and not have the faith. Biology doesn’t make you a follower of Jesus Christ.”

In what specific ways do people take for granted that their parents’, grandparents’, siblings’, or other family member’s faith automatically makes them a Christian?

How might this play out in their behavior, church involvement, family, etc.?

What steps are necessary for a person to begin to own their faith, rather than assume they have been “grandfathered” in to God’s family?

In what specific ways have you owned your faith?

Just as the new birth is not physical, but spiritual, the family of the kingdom is not related by human blood, but by Jesus’s blood.

Jesus ends up going to Judea after all, but he goes privately. What feast is being celebrated? (The Feast of Booths.)

GO DEEPER

Learn more about the Feast of Booths from the following passages: Leviticus 23:33–43; Numbers 29:12–38

How long did the Feast of Booths last? (Seven days, with an eighth day of rest.)

What were the people commanded to do during this Feast? (Hold a holy convocation with no work; present food offerings to the Lord; rejoice before the Lord with fruit, palm tree branches, leafy greens and willows of the brook for seven days; feast; dwell in booths.)

Why is it significant that during this time of offerings, God commands the people to do no work?

What did the Feast commemorate? (It was a time to remember and reflect upon when God brought Israel out of Egypt and the people dwelled in tents, or booths, in the wilderness; also to praise God for his provision of the harvest.)
Do you take time to pause and remember and reflect on how God has provided for you and led you? What specific time could you set aside to do this?

According to the book of Numbers, what specific offerings were the people supposed to make? (Sacrifice a prescribed number of bulls, rams, male lambs without blemish, grain offerings, male goats, burnt offerings, drink offerings.)

What message does this give about the inconvenience, cost, and seriousness of atoning for sin? (Sin is messy, costly, and inconvenient to atone for.)

Do you view your sin as costly? How might this change the way you consider your own sin?

What does it tell us about God that he makes even the atonement of sin a feast?

The Feast of Booths was a celebration that the Jews kept each year to remember the way God brought his people out of Egypt, and provided for them through the wilderness. Though a time of joy, it also carried a somber weight, as the people labored to sacrifice many animals to atone for their sin.

Read John 7:10–24.

Up to this point, Jesus’s public ministry has been marked by signs and miracles. What does he do at the feast? (He teaches in the temple.)

Why did the Jews marvel? (They knew Jesus had never had formal training or studying, but his teaching was so deep and insightful.)

Are there certain things about Jesus that make you marvel? What are they? (Consider: his knowledge of you, his answers to the manipulative questions of the Pharisees, his plan for your life?)

The Jews begin to question and demand to know where Jesus has received training to be able to teach so profoundly. Where does Jesus say his teaching comes from? (It comes from the Father, the One who sent him.)

How does Jesus say a person will know whether he is from God, or an imposter? (If a person wants to “do God’s will,” he or she will know.)

Jesus makes it clear that when a person is truly seeking God, listening for him, searching the Scriptures, and has a heart that wants what God wants, they will be able to discern what is true about him.

What does this imply about those who refuse to believe he is from God? (They don’t want God’s will, they aren’t seeking God, and they can’t see Jesus for who he is.)

How does Jesus expose the Jews’ hypocrisy? (He uses the example of them circumcising a man on the Sabbath.)

While the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath day, they turned a blind eye to the way they themselves brushed over the Sabbath day in order to perform circumcision. They would strive to keep the “letter of the law” in some regards, but miss the spirit of the law entirely. Jesus’s words of truth expose their hypocrisy.
What are some ways Christians can be hypocritical today?

Are there ways you are tempted to hold others accountable for not reaching a standard, but perhaps don’t reach the standard yourself?


After Jesus exposes the people’s hypocrisy, what is the crowd’s reaction to him? (The people are divided. Some are astonished, and some are enraged.)

At the beginning of this session, Tony highlighted a teaching made popular by C.S. Lewis: Jesus is either a Liar, a Lunatic, or he is Lord.

If Jesus knows he is not God, but still claims to be God, he is a liar. If Jesus thinks he is God, but is not God, he is a lunatic. Many people acknowledge that Jesus is a good teacher, but don’t think he is God. Is it possible to believe that Jesus is a good teacher if he is a liar or a lunatic? How do those two options cancel out the possibility that he is merely a good teacher?

Jesus was divisive among the people. They had strong reactions to him. Knowing there was such division and hostility toward Jesus, how might this encourage his followers who experience rejection and hostility today? (Followers of Christ, who are an extension of God’s very presence by his Spirit, are reacted to in the same manner: some are attracted to the fragrance of life, some are repelled by what they perceive as the stench of death. Believers should be encouraged to know this polarization is frequently the reaction to Jesus.)

Have you, as a follower of Jesus, experienced a taste of the division and hostility he faced? How have others reacted to Christ in you?


What does Jesus cry out on the last day of the feast? (“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”)
Jesus’s statement is stunning. There’s more going on here than meets the eye. During the Feast of Booths, the people would partake in water parades every day. In a ceremony each morning, the priests would draw water from the Pool of Siloam and carry a golden pitcher of water to the temple amid songs of praise to God for the harvest. While meant to trigger the people’s memories of God providing water for Israel in the wilderness, it had come to also symbolize the near-empty cisterns of their cities and their prayers for rain. When Jesus cries out, “Come to me and drink!” his statement would have been a vivid parable of who he had come to be for the people.

**How does the context of the water ceremonies make Jesus’s statement impactful?**

**What flows from the temple and the presence of God?** (A living river of water.)

**How are the plants that are growing on each side of the river described?** (Flourishing; abundant; bearing fruit for eating and leaves that will heal.)

**In view of the plants growing by this river, what do you suppose the person who is rooted by this living water will look like?** (Flourishing, bearing fruit, thriving.)

**According to 1 Corinthians 10, who is the Rock?** (Christ.)

Like the rock that gushed water for the people in the wilderness, Christ is the true rock, from whom gushes the living water of the Spirit. When a person comes to him, God puts his Spirit inside them, making living water available in their soul at all times. In Christ and by the power of the Spirit in us, we flourish, bearing fruit and being used by God as instruments of healing. The living water Christ claims to be is truly transformational to our souls.

While Jesus’s words about living water are astounding in themselves, we also find more depth in his statement. This living water is not just available to us—it is something that will rise up inside us.

**GO DEEPER**

Learn more about the significance of water from the following passages: *Exodus 17:1–7; Isaiah 12:3; Ezekiel 47:1–12; 1 Cor. 10:1–4; Rev. 22:1–2*

**How did God provide water for his people in the wilderness?** (When Moses struck a rock, water gushed out.)

The people had tested the Lord in the wilderness, asking, “Is the Lord among us or not?” How is this similar to what the crowds are saying about Jesus’s teaching? What does it reveal about their hearts?

**PEEK AT THE GREEK**

The word translated “heart” in verse 38 comes from the Greek noun *koilia*. Jesus literally says, “Out of his belly will flow rivers of living water.” Using this word, Jesus was talking about the inner man. To the Jews, this was a very visceral, gut-level sense of intuition. *Koilia* describes the center of a person, from which the emotions, thoughts, and choices stem. When Jesus promised that living water would flow from the inner person, he was essentially saying that the Spirit would come and change that person on the deepest level. New emotions, thoughts, and choices would naturally stem from that person, as the source of who they were had been transformed, sprung up by the Spirit.
As Tony said, God builds a well in your soul when you come to Christ. **Have you learned how to access this well? Do you know how to be nourished and refreshed by it? How would you teach someone to access this well of the Spirit if they don't know how?**

In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit springing up inside you?

**Read John 7:40–52.**

Throughout this chapter, the Jews have sought to arrest Jesus multiple times. **Why are they unable to do so?** (His hour had not yet come. It wasn't God’s timing.)

Tony put it this way: “Nothing can happen to you unless it passes through God’s fingers first.” Our God is sovereign. He holds all things in his hand and controls the flow of time.

**Is the idea of God’s sovereignty comforting or disconcerting to you? Why?**

How does knowing that God is in control bring a tremendous amount of freedom?

Do you think this makes a difference to someone living in fear? Anxiety? Stress? What could someone living in fear do to begin to experience freedom?

Read verses 50–52 again.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, isn’t quite ready to publicly declare his belief in Jesus. **However, what evidence is given in the text that shows that God is working in his heart?** (Nicodemus partly defends Jesus to the Pharisees.)

Jesus talked about the living water that would spring up inside a person’s soul and transform everything about them. Even though Nicodemus isn’t completely changed yet, we can see God beginning to slowly change his life.

**In what ways do you see small, gradual evidences of God’s work in the hearts of those around you?**
How do the Pharisees respond to Nicodemus’s hesitant defense of Jesus? (They taunt him, saying, “Are you from Galilee too?” and point him back to their laws and knowledge.)

In another display of irony, when Nicodemus points the Pharisees back to their own law and legalism (“Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?”) the Pharisees, filled with hypocrisy, ignore the law they hold everyone else to. They clearly love the darkness more than the light, and refuse to accept Jesus for who he is.

As you look back on your life, in what ways have you seen God transform you gradually?

As this gradual transformation has taken place, what role has the Holy Spirit, springing up inside you, played?

What might God want to do in your life to continue this transformation?

Using an analogy rich in meaning, Jesus stands up and declares himself to be Living Water. He speaks of the coming Holy Spirit, who will transform the lives and hearts of those he resides in.

Each of us must come to a conclusion about this controversial figure. It’s impossible to be neutral about Jesus.

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

Pray: Ask God to allow you to experience the reality of the Holy Spirit in your life and heart. Pray that you would learn how to access this river, and ask that you would begin to be satisfied by the Spirit.

Memorize: Memorize and meditate upon John 7:37–38 this week.

Create: Write a short story from the perspective of someone in the crowd at the Feast of Booths. Is this person a Pharisee? A child? A follower of Jesus? What things do they see and hear? What conclusions are they coming to about Jesus? What kind of rift does he cause in their social circle? What will they do next after hearing Jesus teach?

READING PLAN

Leader: In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

Week 8

☐ Day 1: 8:1–11
☐ Day 2: 8:12–30
☐ Day 3: 8:31–38
☐ Day 4: 8:39–47
☐ Day 5: 8:48–59

LAST WORD

At the Feast of Booths, the crowds are both mesmerized and enraged at Jesus’s profound teaching. As things come to a boil, Jesus exposes the hypocrisy and sin of the Jews, provoking them to attempt to arrest him. But because it is not yet time for him to die, they are unable to do so. God is sovereign over every situation.
SESSION BIG IDEA
Because of the claims Jesus makes about himself, we cannot remain neutral, but must decide what we believe to be true about him.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO
What three choices do we have about who Jesus is?

What do we learn about God’s timing in this passage?

How do we experience transformation in Christ?

BIBLE STUDY NOTES: JOHN 7:1–52
Notes

PERSONAL REFLECTION
In what specific ways have you owned your faith?

Are there ways you are tempted to hold others accountable for not reaching a standard, but perhaps don’t reach the standard yourself?

LIVE IT OUT
Select at least one activity to complete before next week.

Pray: Ask God to allow you to experience the reality of the Holy Spirit in your life and heart. Pray that you would learn how to access this river, and ask that you would begin to be satisfied by the Spirit.

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READING PLAN
Week 8
☐ Day 1: 8:1–11
☐ Day 2: 8:12–30
☐ Day 3: 8:31–38
☐ Day 4: 8:39–47
☐ Day 5: 8:48–59
SESSION 9:
JOHN 8:1-59

Quick Start

READ
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

PRINT
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Since keeping the law does not save us, we must belong to the true Father in order to find freedom.

Head Change: To know that none of us is capable of keeping the law.

Heart Change: To feel the relief of freedom from sin.

Life Change: To cease judging others and finding righteousness in our ability to keep rules.

OPEN
Do you or someone you know have a striking resemblance to a parent, grandparent, or other family member?

Which features are similar?

For some families in particular, the resemblance between older and younger generations can be uncanny.

In John chapter 8, Jesus is tangled in a conflict with the religious leaders, and has pointed words for them about their family resemblance—and it’s not a compliment.

READ
John 8:1–59

WATCH
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

What was the religious leaders’ motivation in coming to Jesus?

What incentivizes us to obey the Lord?

What does Jesus guarantee about his followers’ future?

Show Session 9: John 8:1–59 (8 minutes)

DISCUSS
Continuing to seek a reason to arrest Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees create a trap. Or, as Tony said, they put him in a no-win situation.

What trap do the scribes and Pharisees create for Jesus? (They bring a woman caught in adultery and quote the punishment prescribed by the Law of Moses, asking Jesus what they should do.)

Why did this create a perceived dilemma for Jesus? (If he didn’t agree to killing her, he would violate the law; if he did agree to killing her, he wouldn’t be showing love and compassion.)
**GO DEEPER**

Learn more about the Law’s requirements and consequences for adultery from the following passages: Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 17:5–7 & 22:22, 24

According to these passages, what is the punishment for sexual immorality? (Death by stoning.)

Who receives this consequence? (Both the man and the woman, the adulterer and the adulteress.)

What condition must be met for them to be put to death? (It must be on the evidence of two or three witnesses; they can’t be put to death on the evidence of one witness.)

Who is instructed to begin stoning the adulterer and adulteress first? (The witnesses.)

Did the Pharisees and Scribes adhere to the prescribed boundaries of this law, or not? In what way? (No, they only brought the woman, rather than both the man and woman. The text doesn’t specify whether more than one witness discovered the situation. Also, the witnesses didn’t stone them as instructed, but asked Jesus about it.)

The Pharisees and Scribes were adamant about keeping every facet of the law, but this instance displays a hypocritical neglect of the specifics of the very law they insisted everyone else adhere to. Their motivation is exposed. They don’t have a desire to honor God through his commands, but to manipulate the law to trap Jesus. They don’t love God’s law, they love their own religious veneer. Their corruption runs deep.

It’s easy to feel secure behind the shiny veneer of religious adherence. How does Jesus respond to the Pharisees and Scribes? (He bends down and begins writing with his finger in the dirt.)

Tony referenced Jesus’s actions in this session. Of what imagery did Tony remind us that makes sense of Jesus writing on the ground? (He wrote the Law itself.)

As the author of the Law itself, what answer does Jesus give them? (“Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”)

Jesus’s answer was perfect and profound. While not bypassing the Law, he swiftly exposed the sin in each of his accusers’ hearts and showed mercy to the woman. The scribes and Pharisees failed to see that using the law to condemn the adulteress made them susceptible to its standard. Jesus not only calls them out for failing to walk through the correct process of the law, but reminds them that none of them is capable of keeping the law.

Christians are often very judgmental. In what ways are you quick to jump to judgment of others, as the Pharisees did?

What steps can you take to stop judging others?

**GO DEEPER**

Learn more about being under the standard of the Law from the following passage: Romans 2:1, 21–23

According to Romans 2, how does a person condemn himself? (By passing judgment on another and practicing the very same things.)
Consider your own life. Where are you most susceptible for passing judgment on other people? Are there certain sins you feel you are “above”?

How would you measure up if someone used your standards of judgment on you?

Read John 8:10–11.

How does Jesus address the woman after everyone has gone? (“Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you.”)

Who is the only person in the situation without sin, qualified to condemn her if he wished? (Jesus.)

What does his treatment of this woman reveal about him? (Though he is without sin, he does not come to condemn, but to save. He displays compassion and grace.)

How have you experienced the compassion and grace of Jesus toward you in your own sin?

Tony talked about the way the woman was incentivized to obey the Lord after he removed her condemnation. In what way has his kindness to you incentivized you to obey him?

Immediately after silencing the Pharisees and restoring the woman, what statement does Jesus make about himself? (“I am the light of the world.”)

PEEK AT THE GREEK

The word translated “light” in verse 12 comes from the Greek noun phos. It depicts radiance, illumination, and brightness. Light was symbolic throughout the Old Testament. From light being the first aspect of creation, to the way God led his people by a pillar of fire through the wilderness, to the psalmist penning, “The Lord is my light and my salvation” in Psalm 27:1, light was deeply significant. Like his statement about living water, Jesus’s claim to be the light of the world was carefully contextualized. At the Feast of Booths, four golden lamps, seventy-five feet high, were lit amidst singing and celebration, reminding the people that God had promised to send a light into their dark world. With this statement, Jesus declared himself to be that promised light.

What do you imagine the various reactions might have been to Jesus’s declaration? (Rage, silence, thinking he is arrogant, seeing it as beautiful, hope, etc.)

How does Jesus’s statement about being the light of the world relate to the situation with the adulterous woman and the Pharisees? How did he illuminate, bring clarity, or expose darkness in his dealings with those involved? (Jesus’s words brought clarity to the whole situation. He illuminated what was true. He also exposed just how dark the Pharisees’ hearts were.)

Jesus, the light, makes all things clear and plain. He reveals the truth and shines light on our lives.
In what ways have you personally experienced the illuminating radiance of Jesus in your own life? In what ways has he made the truth clear to you?

Read John 8:13–30.

How do the Pharisees answer Jesus? ("You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.")

Though Jesus had just exposed their failure to follow the procedures of the law by bringing the adulterous woman to him, the Pharisees ironically throw the law back at him.

But Jesus turns the tables, making his case against them.

Jesus draws a number of comparisons between himself and the Pharisees. What specific comparisons does Jesus list? (I know where I’m going, but you do not; you judge, but I judge no one; you are from below, but I am from above; you cite the law, but I actually keep its standards; you charge me with sin, but you will die in your sin.)

Verse 30 shares a profound insight. What is the result of Jesus’s words against the Pharisees? (Many believed in him.)

Though it seems counterintuitive, people are drawn to the Savior at unlikely times. Jesus is embroiled in a public conflict, and it’s not his softness or compassion that fosters belief in the people, but the truth of his words.

It’s easy to assume that unbelievers will only be drawn to Jesus when he says something comforting or easy to hear. How does the way so many believed in Jesus as he spoke difficult truth change your perspective on the occasions when unbelievers might possibly be drawn to Christ?

Have you ever attempted to soften the gospel or make it more palatable for people? Why does that rob the gospel of its power?

In a culture that is growing increasing hostile toward Christianity, how does it make you bolder in sharing Christ to remember that the gospel does have power, even in hostile situations?

The Pharisees insisted on staying in darkness. They wanted nothing to do with the Light of the World, but chose to cling to their religious rituals, justifying themselves by their (perceived) ability to keep the law.
In what ways have you been tempted to act like the Pharisee—to justify dark behavior with the disguise of religious adherence?

How would it affect you to feel free of condemnation, the way Jesus freed the woman from condemnation?

In what ways have you acted more like Christ, and extended grace and compassion?

Jesus is the “key” that unlocks our chains of sin. As Tony shared, to reject Jesus is to say, “I want to stay incarcerated.” But when we bring our sin to the light of Christ, he offers forgiveness and freedom.

The Pharisees give a sneering response to Jesus’s offer of freedom. What insult do they throw at him? (“We were not born of sexual immorality”—a reference to his mother Mary becoming pregnant before marriage.)

Who do the Pharisees claim as their father? (Abraham—they claim inherent rights as offspring of the man who made a covenant with God.)

Who does Jesus say that their true father is? (“You are of your father the devil.”)

What evidences in the Pharisees’ lives show “family resemblance” to the devil? (They are liars; they can’t bear to hear Jesus’s words; his words have no place in them; they are murderers and their will is to do what the devil desires.)

Jesus tells the Pharisees that in order to be acceptable to God, they need a greater Father than Abraham. This is true for all of us. Religion is not what makes us right with God. We must belong to a different family in order to experience freedom and life.

In contrast to the Pharisees’ lives, what does it look like to have God as one’s Father, according to Jesus? (You are freed from sin; you will love and receive Jesus; you will never see death.)

Read John 8:31–47.

Jesus spoke to those who had believed in him, encouraging them to abide in his word. He promised that abiding in him would reveal the truth to them, which would set them free. When they didn’t understand, he explained that anyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. (For more on this idea, see Romans 6:16–20.)

Tony reminded us that we can’t deliver ourselves from sin. What types of sin have a “stranglehold” on your life? Do you want to be free?

Leader: Sharing answers to the above question can feel vulnerable and scary. Allow members of the group to share if they wish, or to pass if they wish. Remind them that stepping into the light with sin is the first step to repentance and freedom. This is what Jesus offers us here.
What are the “family resemblances” in your own life? What things in your life reflect God as your father? What doesn’t? What do these things reveal about your family tree?

What does your judgment of others actually reveal about your own heart?

Jesus concludes his discussion on family resemblance with a statement meant to blow the Pharisees’ claim as offspring of Abraham out of the water. “Before Abraham was, I AM.” Essentially, he tells them, “I AM Yahweh. I AM God.”

What do the Pharisees do when Jesus claims divinity? (They pick up stones to throw at him.)

Forgetting “he who is without sin, cast the first stone,” their outrage leads them to try to stone the only one without sin.

Is there a particular sin or trait you are quick to judge in other people? What practical step can you take this week to cease judgment?

In Christ, there is no condemnation for you. In what way does freedom from condemnation compel you to cease judgment of others?

Jesus has freed you from sin and condemnation. How does knowing you have such a compassionate, good God compel you to love Him and love others?
Caught in a no-win situation, Jesus astounds the Pharisees, scribes, and crowds with his wisdom, compassion, and truth. After restoring a woman to dignity and exposing the sin of the Pharisees, he makes the jaw-dropping statement that he is the light of the world amidst a backdrop of blazing temple lanterns.

As the Pharisees continue their attempts to accuse Jesus, he turns the tables and prosecutes them. While they claim Abraham as their father, Jesus tells them their true father is the devil, as evidenced by the family resemblance in their lives. He explains they need a greater Father than Abraham, and that he is this Father.

As the enraged Pharisees pick up stones to kill him, Jesus hides himself and leaves the Temple. Jesus hides himself from those who are choosing to stay in darkness. The presence of God, God himself, exits the very place built for his people to find fellowship with him. They have missed the point entirely.

We don’t have to miss the point, however. Christ offers us mercy, grace, and the removal of our condemnation. Tony reminded us that there is no greater peace than knowing him.

What about you? Have you experienced his mercy and grace? Do you know him? Is your future guaranteed in him?

Discuss: Spend time with a friend and talk about the ways you might be tempted to soften the gospel. Do you try to make it more palatable to unbelieving friends? What does this reveal about your beliefs of Jesus?

LEADER: In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

**Week 9**

- **Day 1:** 9:1–7
- **Day 2:** 9:8–15
- **Day 3:** 9:18–23
- **Day 4:** 9:24–34
- **Day 5:** 9:35–41

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

**Pray:** Ask God to free you from the sin you feel enslaved to. Pray that you would experience his compassion, and that he would remove condemnation.

**Create:** Create a song that contrasts light and darkness. Create a specific motif, or musical pattern, for “light” and a specific motif for “darkness.” Perhaps the “light” motif gradually invades and overtakes the “dark” motif. If you aren’t musical, consider contrasting light and darkness through paint, photography, or poetry.
SESSION BIG IDEA
Since keeping the law does not save us, we must belong to the true Father in order to find freedom.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO
What was the religious leaders’ motivation in coming to Jesus?

What incentivizes us to obey the Lord?

What does Jesus guarantee about his followers’ future?

PERSONAL REFLECTION
In what way has Jesus’s kindness to you incentivized you to obey him?

What are the “family resemblances” in your own life? What things in your life reflect God as your father? What doesn’t? What do these things reveal about your family tree?

LIVE IT OUT
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READING PLAN

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SESSION 10:

JOHN 9:1-41

Quick Start

READ
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

PRINT
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Because God’s grace exposes our condition, we must either embrace sight through faith in him or embrace blindness by rejecting him.

Head Change: To know that pursuing self-sufficiency apart from God displays spiritual blindness.

Heart Change: To feel peaceful in dependence upon God.

Life Change: To take action in trusting faith and obedience before we see the full picture of what God is doing.

OPEN
Whether it’s a Chihuahua named Giant, or a video posted on social media about the negative side effects of social media, irony is all around us.

Irony can be defined as a rhetorical device, literary technique, or event in which what appears on the surface to be the case, differs radically from what is actually the case.

Are you a fan of irony? What is the most ironic situation you have ever encountered?

READ
John 9:1–41

In John 9, we read a brilliant masterpiece filled with irony. It involves blindness and sight. Throughout the entire chapter, we’re forced to question, “Who is blind, and who sees?”

WATCH
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

Why does God allow difficulty?

What kind of opposition does a follower of Jesus face?

What does Jesus use a man’s physical blindness to demonstrate?

Show Session 10: John 9:1–41 (10 minutes)

DISCUSS
Jesus had just hidden himself and left the temple, evading the Pharisees who had picked up stones to throw at him. What happens during this exit as he passes by? (He sees a man blind from birth.)

Though the blind man could not see Jesus, Jesus saw him. This is the story for each one of us. Before we come to know Christ, each of us is blind and unable to see God as he is. But because he sees us and moves toward us, we are given sight.
Where did Jesus see you? What life circumstances were you in when God made himself known to you?

How did he pursue you when you weren’t looking for him?

How did he open your eyes to see him?

What does this reveal about Jesus’s heart for helpless people on the fringes? (He is compassionate and attentive to them; he searches them out.)

The disciples ask Jesus a question that reveals their worldview. “Who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” They assume that such suffering is a consequence for sin. Jesus takes this opportunity to clear their lens and shift their perspective.

How does Jesus answer them? (“It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”)

In what way do you tend to view suffering? Do you associate suffering or difficult circumstances with punishment? Why or why not?

GO DEEPER
Learn more about the nature of suffering from the following passages: Romans 8:18–28 & 37–39; 1 Peter 2:21–24 & 4:12–19; Hebrews 12:3–11

In what ways are humans impacted by a groaning, fallen world? (Natural disasters; disease; sickness; death; sinful people, etc.)

How have you personally been impacted by a broken, fallen world? Do you attribute it to a fallen world, or to something else?

We are awaiting our adoption as sons, and our redemption. In the meantime, God gives us a comforting promise. What does Romans 8:28 promise us about everything we experience, both good and bad? (All things work together for good for those who love God.)
In what way does knowing that even suffering is used by God for your good change your perspective?

In what ways does it give you strength and hope in suffering to know that one day, we won’t live in a broken world?

As believers, we have the beautiful promise that everything we will ever experience—even suffering—is being used by God for our good and his glory. Our lives are part of a much larger story: the story of redemption. Someday, we will no longer live in a broken world, but in a perfect world, free of any suffering.

1 Peter tells us that Christ entrusted himself to God in his suffering. What would it look like for you to entrust yourself to God, like Christ, in suffering?

What is God’s purpose in allowing suffering to discipline us? (For our good, that we may share in his holiness.)

Because we live in a fallen, corrupted world, we naturally experience suffering. Other times, God wisely and lovingly allows us to suffer to teach dependence on him, bring good things about for us, and glorify his name. Because of Christ, we can embrace our suffering with joy, knowing that Jesus bore the ultimate suffering on our behalf when he paid the punishment for our sin. We will never be separated from God, and we know that he is continually working to redeem and make all things new in a perfect world where no one will suffer again. Because Christ absorbed all of God’s wrath toward us, any suffering we experience is not punishment, but is merely an instrument wielded by the kind hand of God for our good.

How did God use this man’s blindness for good? (His blindness was the very thing that made him the recipient of a miracle. The new kingdom order is displayed in his life and body.)

Tony reminded us that God allows difficulties for his greater glory. How have you seen God use your suffering for your good?

Why does suffering give us reason to rejoice? (We share his sufferings because the Holy Spirit rests on us; it glorifies God.)

What does Jesus do to give the blind man sight? (He spit on the ground and made mud with his saliva, then put it on the man's eyes and told him to go wash.)

Did Jesus need to use physical matter to heal this man's eyes? What might have been the reasons behind using spit and mud in this miracle? (No; in other miracles, he just spoke words and the person was healed. He could be communicating to this man through one of his other senses. He also could be using the mud symbolically.)

**PEEK AT THE GREEK**

The word translated “mud” in verse 6 comes from the Greek noun πέλος. Also translated as “clay,” this word reminds the observant reader that humanity is made of the earth, fashioned from dust. When Jesus spit on the ground, he was enacting a sort of recreation. Just as his breath mingled with dust to create the first man, his spit mingled with clay to recreate the blind man, giving him sight. The miracle announced that the Kingdom was beginning to break into the corruption of the fallen creation and make all things new. Jesus had come to reverse the curse. This miracle heralds this reality.

With the blind man receiving his sight, the first fruits of the coming kingdom are evident. Those who witnessed the miracle surely would have thought back to Isaiah 35, which promised, “the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.” Jesus also did this miracle on the Sabbath. While predictably upsetting the Pharisees, restoring this man's sight on the Sabbath also foreshadowed an eternal rest from the brokenness of our fallen world.

What does Jesus instruct the man to do after he put the mud on his eyes? (“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.”)

How does this man's obedience play a role in his healing? How does his obedience display his faith? (He had to obey in faith in order to be healed. He trusted enough to follow the instructions; he could have doubted and not gone.)

What does this teach us about obedience’s correlation to experiencing God’s power? (We must play our part in faith.)

We are called to embrace sight through our faith in Jesus. To reject him is to embrace blindness. This man chose to believe Jesus before he saw anything.

Do you ever withhold belief until after you’ve “seen”? What would this text say to that? (Belief comes before seeing.)

Aside from washing the literal mud from his eyes, how is the man’s act of washing significant? (Washing reminds us of the cleansing we all need to experience in order to be cleared of our sin and guilt. Jesus offers us this cleansing.)

“Siloam” means “sent.” Jesus was known as the Son, sent from the Father. When a person embraces him by faith and washes in his blood, they receive spiritual sight. Then, they are sent out to the world with their testimony as a witness.

Tony made the great point, “So when there are things going wrong in your life, always start with the Word, apply it to your life, and allow the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit to bring about the change. That is exactly the process that Jesus Christ used in this healing.”

Do you “start with the Word,” as Tony said, when things are going wrong in your life? Where do you typically turn first?

How could you get in the habit of turning first to the Word of God and making practical application part of your routine?
Read John 9:8–34.

Who does this man immediately give testimony to? (His neighbors and the Pharisees.)

What does he tell them about what happened? (“He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”)

His testimony is straightforward and simple. Do you ever feel the need to give a complicated testimony to others? What is the simplest way to share what Jesus has done for you?

What does the blind man’s testimony cause among the Pharisees? (Division and arguing.)

The Jews repeatedly question the man, even bringing in his parents, to get to the bottom of the astounding event. What was at stake for the Pharisees that they’d work so hard to disprove the miracle? (Further losing their influence over the people who were listening to the blind man’s testimony about Jesus.)

How do they treat the formerly blind man? (They revile him, telling him he was born in utter sin. Then they throw him out of the temple.)

Tony pointed out in his teaching that when you confess Jesus Christ, there will be opposition. Similar to how they treated Jesus, the Jews revile, insult, and reject the man.

Have you experienced rejection as a Christian? How did that feel at the time?

What things can we do to be prepared for future opposition because of our faith in Jesus?

Tony assured us that we will be rejected by those who also reject Jesus. This is a great encouragement because it proves that we are actually following Jesus and have his Spirit living inside us.

Just before being cast out, the blind man speaks to the Pharisees. What does he say in verses 30–33? (He opened my eyes! If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.)

A great irony takes place, as the man born blind is able to see the light of the world, while the Pharisees, who have physical sight, are blind to spiritual truth.

Read John 9:35–41.

What does Jesus do after the blind man is cast out? (He seeks him out and finds him.)

After Jesus reveals who he is, what is the man’s response? (He worships.)

Does Jesus stop the man from worshipping? What does this reveal about him? (Jesus accepts his worship. It again shows that he is God. A good, moral teacher would not allow someone to worship him if he were not God.)

When the Pharisees again sneer at Jesus’s words to the man, he condemns them. Tony put it this way: “Those who know they don’t see, will see. Those who think they see and don’t recognize their spiritual need, will not see.”

What are some characteristics of a person who knows they are dependent upon God for spiritual sight?
What are some characteristics of a person who doesn’t recognize their own spiritual need?

In what ways might you be in danger of not recognizing your own spiritual need? How can you guard against this type of arrogance?

LAST WORD

In an amazing miracle, Jesus sees a man who was born blind, spits on the ground, and puts the resulting mud on the man’s eyes. After following Jesus’s instructions to wash in the Pool of Siloam, the man receives his sight. The miracle announced that the Kingdom was beginning to break in, where all things would be made new.

The man’s simple testimony stirred great division among the Jews, and caused much opposition. The Pharisees reviled and rejected the man, unknowingly becoming a picture of irony: the blind man has spiritual sight, while the physically seeing Pharisees are spiritually blind.

Jesus seeks the blind man out, revealing his identity and evoking worship. Though the man had been cast out of the temple, Jesus had secured his place as a “living stone” in the true Temple (1 Peter 2:4–5).

We are left with the same choice as the Pharisees and the blind man. Embrace Jesus in faithful obedience, or reject him and remain in our blindness?

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

Memorize: Memorize and meditate upon Romans 8:28.

Create: Use your phone to create a video that captures the sense of wonder that the blind man must have felt upon receiving sight. Aim to capture beautiful scenery as the sun comes up. What details, colors, movement, and depth can you depict through the video as darkness gives way to sight? How can you experiment with blurriness coming into focus? What small details most capture your attention? Be creative.

Journal: What trials have you suffered? What was your perspective on those things at the time? How has God used those things for your good? Is it still in process? How has he used it to open your eyes to see him more clearly? In what way is he disciplining you as a child, in love?

READING PLAN

Leader: In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

Week 10

- **Day 1:** 10:1–6
- **Day 2:** 10:7–18
- **Day 3:** 10:19–30
- **Day 4:** 10:31–39
- **Day 5:** 10:40–42
SESSION BIG IDEA
Because God’s grace exposes our condition, we must either embrace sight through faith in him, or embrace blindness by rejecting him.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO

Why does God allow difficulty?

What kind of opposition does a follower of Jesus face?

What does Jesus use a man’s physical blindness to demonstrate?

BIBLE STUDY NOTES: JOHN 9:1–41

Notes

PERSONAL REFLECTION

How have you seen God use your suffering for your good?

What things can we do to be prepared for future opposition because of our faith in Jesus?

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity to complete before next week.

Memorize: Memorize and meditate upon Romans 8:28.

Create: Use your phone to create a video that captures the sense of wonder that the blind man must have felt upon receiving sight. Aim to capture beautiful scenery as the sun comes up. What details, colors, movement, and depth can you depict through the video as darkness gives way to sight? How can you experiment with blurriness coming into focus? What small details most capture your attention? Be creative.

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READING PLAN

Week 10
- Day 1: 10:1–6
- Day 2: 10:7–18
- Day 3: 10:19–30
- Day 4: 10:31–39
- Day 5: 10:40–42
SESSION 11:
JOHN 10:1-42

Quick Start

READ
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

PRINT
Before meeting, make enough copies of this session’s handout for your entire group. The handouts came with your download.

WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: If a person belongs to the fold of God, they will hear his voice, follow him, and experience abundant life.

Head Change: To know that the Shepherd desires to lead us into abundant life.

Heart Change: To feel the joy of being fully known by Christ.

Life Change: To stay close to the Shepherd by following his voice.

READ
John 10:1–42

WATCH
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

How does a person get into Jesus’s fold?

What kind of life did God intend for us to have? How do we experience it now?

How does a person tune in to the Shepherd’s voice?

DISCUSS
After telling the Jewish leaders that they are spiritually blind, Jesus turns to another metaphor: sheep and shepherding. Insinuating that the Jewish leaders are thieves among the sheep who only seek personal gain, Jesus contrasts himself with these leaders. He continues using a shepherd image that the people would understand well to explain the nature of his relationship to his own.
According to verse 3, how do the sheep and the shepherd interact? (The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.)

How would you describe your Shepherd’s voice? What characterizes his tone, his words, and his demeanor? (Loving, gentle, kind, patient tone and demeanor; truthful, specific, convicting words.)

For believers, we have been given the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:15–16). This Spirit lives inside us, to speak to us, comfort us, and lead us. We become familiar with his voice and leading as we tune in to it. Tony reminded us that the Spirit helps us tune in.

Would you say you are tuned in to the Spirit? Why or why not?

Do you expect to hear his voice each day, or assume you will not? Why?

What kinds of things strengthen your ability to hear the Spirit? What about weaken?

How would you instruct a new believer to begin tuning in to the Spirit’s voice? How might you begin to make more space in your life to hear the Spirit’s voice and be expectant? (Listening and stillness; asking him to help you hear his voice; reading and praying through Scripture; becoming more aware in interactions with other people and waiting for the Spirit’s leading in encouraging or sharing the gospel with someone.)

Have you experienced the Shepherd calling you by name, either through Scripture or in the midst of a circumstance? What was that specific experience like?

Those in Christ have each been called, by name, out of darkness and into the light of a relationship with Jesus. Galatians 4:9 mentions that formerly, we did not know God. But now, we are “known by God.”

You are “known by God.” In a world with little depth of relationship, it’s easy to stay on the surface and remain largely unknown to those around you.

What is your initial reaction to being fully known by God—hiding? Relief? Comfort? Fear? Why?
What difference does it make in the way you view yourself to know that God fully sees and knows you?

Verses 3–4 say that the Shepherd leads us out and goes before us. **What might this mean for our lives?**

How does he lead us? Where does he go before us?

(He leads and guides the way our lives unfold; gives us guidance in particular circumstances; he has gone before us to take our punishment.)

While our Shepherd leads us in every aspect of our lives, it’s important to look to the ultimate way he has led us out and gone before us—the cross. John 10:11 tells us that the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Because he willingly went to the cross, absorbing the wrath we deserved, he led us out of the brokenness and punishment of our sin. He went before us into our punishment so that we will never have to experience life without him. Now, we can live our lives, confident in the knowledge that our Redeemer has gone before us in every trial we will face, shielding us from the worst we could experience.

How does knowing his compassionate sacrifice for you build your trust in him?

Read John 10:5–10.

How do Jesus’s sheep relate to strangers, thieves, and robbers—false teachers, the devil, or demons?

(They flee, because they don’t know their voices; they don’t listen to them.)

What is the thief’s motivation?

(To steal, kill, and destroy.)

Tony referenced the experience of not being able to pinpoint specifically what isn’t right, but just knowing something doesn’t sound like the Master. **Have you ever experienced the voice of an imposter? How did you know that voice was not your Shepherd?**
What are some of the forms strangers and thieves take on today when assaulting God’s people? (The enemy tries to break in on us through demonic forces, false teaching, lies and accusations, consumerism, culture, media, advertising, etc.)

In what ways has the enemy tried to steal from you, kill your joy, and destroy your life?

Are there ever strangers’ voices that you are personally tempted to listen to? What do those voices say to you? Why are you tempted to listen to them?

In verse 10, Jesus says that he came so that we “may have life and have it abundantly.” Tony explains, “Jesus just didn’t die so that we could go to heaven. He also died so that heaven could come to us, and so that we could have the abundant life that he came to give.”

How does it change your perspective of Jesus knowing that he wants an abundant, full life for you?

Tony pointed us to the way Jesus intends for us to have eternal life, and that eternal life is experiential knowledge of God. Jesus has come to give us life to the full. He desires us to possess the fullness of life with him, not just in eternity, but beginning now. This happens as we grow in our relationship with him. As we grow in intimacy with our Shepherd, we experience him, and in turn, a more abundant life. He himself is the abundant life.

What experiential knowledge do you have of Jesus? What have you experienced of him?
What is one thing you could do to put yourself in the headspace and heart space to experience more of him? (Stillness; solitude; quiet; Scripture; prayer.)

Jesus doesn’t stop with the sheep/shepherd analogy. When the people don’t understand his metaphor, he tries a different approach.

What does Jesus call himself in verse 7? (The door of the sheep.)

What does it mean that Jesus is the door? (He is the only way into the fold; he is the only way to enter the Kingdom of God.)

What is life like for the one who enters by him? (That person will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.)

As Tony put it, “to get into his fold, you have to come through him. He is the entrance into the family of God.” He calls himself both the Shepherd and the Door. He is the only way to eternal life, and he himself is eternal life.

GO DEEPER

Learn more about the nature of the relationship between sheep and their Shepherd from the following passages: 1 Samuel 17:34–35; Psalm 78:52–53a; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:11–12; Psalm 23

The analogy of sheep and their Shepherd in Scripture gives us a better understanding of what our relationship with Jesus is like.

How did David defend and care for his flock when he tended sheep? (When a lion or bear took a lamb, David went after him and struck it and delivered the lamb. He would kill the animal.)

In what ways does God defend and protect you as a sheep?

What action verbs describe God’s Shepherding of his people in Psalm 78? (He led and guided.)

What was the result of his leading and guiding? (Safety; they were not afraid.)

How can you remind yourself to turn to your Shepherd’s presence to dispel fear in your life?

How does Isaiah 40 describe our Shepherd? (He tends and gathers us in his arms; he carries us close to his heart and gently leads.)

Isaiah paints a picture of a gentle, tender Shepherd who carries us close to him. Is this picture of God different or similar to how you view him? How does it change your perception of him?

What does God himself promise to do in Ezekiel 34? (To search for and seek out his scattered sheep; to rescue them from darkness.)

When has God had to seek you out in your wandering? How did he rescue you?
What benefits does our Shepherd offer us in Psalm 23? What does he provide and do for us? (He makes us lie down in green pastures; leads us beside still waters; restores us; leads us in righteousness; he is with us in the valley; he prepares us a table in the presence of enemies; anoints us.)

What restorative rest and refreshment has God brought into your life recently? Do you go to him for this kind of replenishment regularly? How might such replenishment be key to abundant life?

The imagery of a shepherd and his sheep is not just one of convenience, it is meant to portray the precious, intimate, close relationship we are offered with Jesus. As our guide, leader, caretaker, protector, and defender, he enables us to dwell securely. In him, we are well provided for and taken care of. Under his voice, we find rest on all sides. Because the Lord is our Shepherd, we lack nothing. He wants us to run to him for our every need.

Read John 10:11–21.

What does the Good Shepherd do for the sheep? (He lays down his life for the sheep.)

How does Jesus do this for us? (Jesus willingly lays down his life to be crucified on the cross. He becomes our substitute, taking our punishment and letting us go free.)

Tony called Jesus a protective covering for his sheep. The Good Shepherd becomes the ultimate sacrificial Lamb who takes away our sin.

Look at verses 14–15 again. What do they say? (“I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.”)

How would you describe the relationship between Jesus and the Father? (Unhindered; complete joy and knowledge and delight; collaborative; always obeying and submitting to the Father’s will.)

Can you imagine what it would be like to have this type of relationship with Jesus, equal to Jesus’s relationship with the Father? Yet this is exactly how Jesus describes our relationship to him. Just as he knows the Father, we will know him. This is the kind of fullness and abundance offered to us.

How would it change your life to have an unhindered, joyful, collaborative relationship with the Father, the way Jesus does? What would look different?

What does it say about the Father’s character, that he wants the type of relationship he has with Jesus, with you? How does that draw you to him?

Who are the other sheep Jesus speaks of? (The Gentiles; Jesus was speaking to the Jews, but he knew that sheep from every tribe, tongue, and nation would also follow him and know his voice.)
We experience much division today among denominations, cultures, and races. **How many flocks does Jesus say he will have? Do we currently live like this? Why or why not?**

Jesus says he lays down his life that he may take it up again. **What does this tell us about his plan and his authority?** (He plans to voluntarily die, and he has the power and authority to begin to live again, too. He has equal authority to God.)

**Read John 10:22–41.**

At the Feast of Dedication, the Jews corner Jesus, demanding that he tell them who he truly is. Jesus responds to their demands by essentially saying, “I’ve already told you in many ways, but you won’t believe.”

**What does Jesus say about the security of his sheep and about his Father?** (“No one can snatch them out of my hand or out of my Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.”)

Have you ever had a fear of falling away, or being snatched from the Father’s hand? **How does this verse settle with you?**

Jesus tells us that none of his sheep will be snatched out of his hand, but sometimes, Christians can worry about falling away, or think they aren’t doing enough to follow God. **How does a Christian walk the fine line between assurance of God’s grasp on their lives, and personal responsibility to stay close to the Lord?** (We diligently seek the Lord, and rest in his promise to hold on to us.)

**How do the Jews react to Jesus’s statement about his oneness with the Father?** (They pick up stones to stone him for blasphemy.)

Jesus appeals to their logic in verse 37. **On what does he encourage his skeptics to base their belief?** (“If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me, but if I do them, even though you don’t believe me, believe the works!”)

Even as they attempt to kill him, Jesus pleads compassionately with them to consider the signs he has laid before them. **After Jesus leaves again, what happens?** (Many come to him at the Jordan and believed in him.)

Tony summed it up well when he said, “Even while being rejected, many people believed in him.”

**What does this show us about the people who came to him? Whose voice did they hear?** (They were sheep, following their Shepherd.)

**Are you willing to follow your Shepherd’s voice against the grain of popular opinion? Why or why not?**
In what specific ways have you already done so?

LAST WORD

Still speaking to the Jews, Jesus paints a picture of his relationship to his followers, calling them sheep, and calling himself the Good Shepherd. It draws attention to the false, imposter shepherds who were carelessly tyrannizing Israel for their personal gain.

Jesus describes his tender care for his flock—he leads and guides them, goes before them, speaks to them, and gives them abundant life. Most importantly, he lays down his life to protect them. Ultimately, this Good Shepherd will become the Lamb of God.

At the Feast of Dedication, also called the Feast of Illumination, the Jews are outraged when Jesus claims equality with God, but some follow him. Jesus’s Shepherd metaphor is on display as many of his sheep hear his voice and believe in him, receiving spiritual illumination. Those who attempt to stone him simply reveal themselves to not belong to his fold, still in spiritual darkness.

The question we must each ask ourselves at the end of chapter 10 is whether we belong to Jesus’s fold. Do you hear his voice? Do you believe that he is one with the Father?

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

Memorize: Memorize and meditate upon John 10:10.

Discuss: Spend time with a friend and talk about the ways the thief steals, kills, and destroys in your life. How does this happen through sin? In what ways are you listening to an imposter’s voice? How can you guard against the thief?

Journal: Consider your own life. Do you believe that Jesus is the Good Shepherd? Do you believe he is one with God? Are you his sheep? Are you staying close to him? How much of the abundant life he offers have you experienced? How might you be rejecting a fuller experience of him? What is he saying to you today?

READING PLAN

Leader: In order for your group to get the most out of their study of The Gospel of John (Part 1), it’s worth reading intentionally through the entire book. This reading plan offers your group a chance to read through the first half of The Gospel of John during the weeks of this study. The plan includes five days of reading that group members can disperse throughout their week. Help your group soak up the Bible in preparation for each session in this study.

Week 11
- Day 1: 11:1–16
- Day 2: 11:17–27
- Day 3: 11:28–37
- Day 4: 11:38–44
- Day 5: 11:45–57
SESSION BIG IDEA
If a person belongs to the fold of God, they will hear his voice, follow him, and experience abundant life.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO

How does a person get into Jesus’s fold?

What kind of life did God intend for us to have? How do we experience it now?

How does a person tune in to the Shepherd’s voice?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

How would you describe your Shepherd’s voice? What characterizes his tone, his words, and his demeanor?

In what ways has the enemy tried to steal from you, kill your joy, and destroy your life?

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity to complete before next week.

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READING PLAN

Week 11
- Day 1: 11:1–16
- Day 2: 11:17–27
- Day 3: 10:28–37
- Day 4: 10:38–44
- Day 5: 10:45–57
SESSION 12:

JOHN 11:1-57

Quick Start

READ
Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

PRINT
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WATCH
Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

Note: For more detailed information, please see the How to Use This Leader’s Guide section on pages 5 and 6.
SESSION GOALS
Every session has a point—what we want to walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Because Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in him will never taste death.

Head Change: To know that Jesus has come to reverse the curse of death.

Heart Change: To feel awe at Jesus's authority over all things, including death.

Life Change: To trust God's timing and ways in our lives on earth.

OPEN
What was your deepest experience of grief? How did you get through it?

Grief is a part of our fallen world. When we experience death and loss, it hurts, sometimes unbearably. In our study of John 11 today, we see Jesus identify with us in our pain, then do something amazing to instill hope within us for the way things will be when he takes his authoritative stand over death.

READ
John 11:1–57

WATCH
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how Tony answers the following questions.

What does the person who has faith in Christ never experience?

What comes before seeing?

Why does Jesus perform his works?

Show Session 12: John 11:1–57 (10 minutes)

DISCUSS
John chapter 11 opens on a family scene. A man named Lazarus is sick. He and his sisters, Mary and Martha, are very close to Jesus. As Lazarus succumbs to his illness, Mary and Martha send for Jesus. They have faith that he is able to heal their brother.

What does Jesus say when he hears the news? ("This illness doesn’t lead to death. It’s for the glory of God.")

According to verse 5, how does Jesus regard these three siblings? (He loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.)

As Jesus is known to love these friends, what would you expect his response to be to the news that Lazarus is sick? (Immediate action, going to Lazarus’s side to heal him and comfort his sisters.)
According to verse 6, how does Jesus’s love for them manifest? (He stayed put for two more days.)

Jesus’s response is completely unexpected. We assume that his love for his friends would compel him to act in a certain way, but instead, his love compels him to do the opposite.

How do you suppose Mary and Martha felt at the fact that he didn’t come to them? (Confused, hurt, upset. Sure that Lazarus would get well.)

Tony talked about the times when it seems as though God isn’t fulfilling what he has promised to us. Have you ever experienced a trial or season of suffering that caused you to doubt God’s character or his love toward you? What happened in that time?

How did God prove himself faithful and loving in your story?

Has God ever answered your prayers differently than you asked or expected him to?

Following Jesus can feel complex. Though God’s love for us and his faithful character never wavers, trials and seasons of suffering can make us feel as though he is cruel, unfeeling, or distant. But Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and it just may be that it was because of that love that he allowed them to live this painful story. Though often we live a story we would never write for ourselves, we learn that he weaves a better plot than we can imagine. We can trust him.

In verse 14, Jesus plainly tells his disciples that Lazarus has died. What does he tell them in verse 15? (For their sake, he is glad he wasn’t there, so that they would believe.)

For his disciples’ sake, he was glad he was not with Lazarus. We know Jesus loves Lazarus and his sisters, so what does this reveal about Jesus’s perspective on Lazarus’s death? (Jesus is up to something beyond the surface, something that Mary and Martha may not see.)

Jesus is interested in accomplishing something more here than just healing Lazarus or answering his sisters. He is after belief for all those involved. He is after everyone’s ultimate good.

Do you believe that Jesus is always working for your greatest good, even in trials? Why or why not?

What other perspective and goal might he have in the midst of our trials?
Read John 11:17–27.

What does Martha say to Jesus when he arrives? (“If you had been here, my brother would not have died.”)

Tony reminded us how easy it is for us to say the same to God: “Where were you?” Have you ever said something similar to God in your grief and confusion?

God is not distant in the midst of our pain. While some hesitate to cry out to him or voice their heartache, God is strong enough to shoulder it, and he invites us to pour out our lament to him. He is deeply emotionally invested in his children.

GO DEEPER

Learn more about God’s emotional investment in his children from the following passages: Psalm 56:8; Psalm 34:17–18; Psalm 62:8; Psalm 103:14; Psalm 147:5

What does God do with our tears and sighs? (He keeps count of our tossings and saves our tears in his bottle and on his record.)

What is God’s relationship and proximity to the brokenhearted? (He is near and saves those with crushed spirits.)

What are we encouraged to do with our grief, sadness, and emotion? (Pour out our hearts to him because he is our refuge.)

How is he mindful of our weaknesses and proclivities? (He remembers that we’re made of dust.)

What do we know of his understanding? (It is beyond measure. It’s infinite.)

What difference does God’s caring, tender demeanor toward you make in your desire to go to him in moments of grief or suffering?

We have a tender God who feels the depths of our emotions alongside us. He is not distant, but holds us close and invites us to cry out to him in our pain.

How does Martha also assert her belief in Jesus, even through her grief? (Verse 22—“But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”)

Even in the middle of grief and tragedy, Martha knows who Jesus is.

Is it easy to affirm belief in God’s goodness, even in the midst of pain? Do you think it’s possible? How?

How does Jesus respond to her statement? (“Your brother will rise again. I am the resurrection and the life...everyone who believes in me shall never die.”)

We see death all around us. People die every day, and loved ones pass away during our own lifetimes. How can Jesus say that one who believes in him will never die? (Though the body dies, a person’s soul lives on eternally. At the resurrection, we will be given new bodies.)
Tony had a humorous take on it: “If we’re in him, we don’t even get to die!” Take a moment to dwell on the thought that your soul will exist for all eternity. There will never be a moment that you’re not alive. **How does this change your perspective on bodily death, or your fear of it?**

Even while lacking full understanding, Martha’s confession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God carries an air of submission to his ways.

**What does submission to God’s will, even when we don’t fully understand, look like in our lives?**

In the pain of life in a broken world, we walk a fine line between relinquishing our sense of control and timing to God, but also feeling permission to grieve the fact that things aren’t the way they should be. **What might be a step toward balancing submission to God’s will and proper emotional grief and lament?**

Do you believe God gives us permission and space to grieve and lament? Why or why not? What does Jesus’s life tell us about this?

Read John 11:28–44.

**What does Mary say to Jesus?** (The same thing Martha said: “If you had been here, my brother would not have died.”)

**What is Jesus’s response to Mary?** (He is deeply moved and greatly troubled at her weeping.)

**Why do you think Jesus had different responses to two sisters who said the same thing to him?**

Though Mary and Martha both spoke the same words of grief to Jesus, Jesus handled each one individually and personally. While he spoke words of hope and truth to Martha, seeing belief in her heart, he simply wept with Mary, identifying with her in her pain. Our God knows exactly how to handle each one of us with care and tenderness. He gives us what we need at the right time. He reveals different sides of himself in exactly the right measure.

**What is Jesus’s response at Lazarus’s tomb?**

(He is moved, greatly troubled, and indignant. He weeps.)
PEEK AT THE GREEK
The Greek word translated “wept” in verse 35 is *dakryein*. It portrays a quiet type of grief. It’s interesting to note that this is not the same word used to describe Mary’s tears, or the tears of the Jews on the scene. While Jesus was moved by Lazarus’s death, he also knew that he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, so it doesn’t make sense to think that his tears would be on account of Lazarus alone. We must also consider that Jesus’s agitation and distress can be attributed to his grief at seeing the massive implications of humanity’s fall firsthand. Feeling the heaviness of sin, loss, grief, and the unraveling of his creation causes Jesus’s heart to break. Jesus weeps over the state of his world and of fallen humanity, which is evidenced by the Jews at Lazarus’s tomb. They failed to believe Jesus’s words that Lazarus would not die, and missed the point that the Son of God was there with them. Jesus also knew that there was a tomb in his future, causing more grief. What a glimpse into Jesus’s great compassion and willingness to be the sacrifice to rescue creation from sin and death.

What does Lazarus’s death foreshadow? (Jesus’s death and resurrection; the resurrection of all believers.)

John 11 provided us with details about Lazarus’s death, burial, and resurrection. Scripture elsewhere gives us details about Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection.

GO DEEPER

We can gain better understanding by comparing and contrasting Lazarus’s death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection.

The stone at Lazarus’s tomb had to be rolled back for him to come out. How was the stone at Jesus’s tomb handled? (Soldiers were posted to make it secure; an angel rolled the stone back.)

According to Matthew 28, did the angel roll back the stone to the tomb before or after Jesus’s resurrection? (After. “He is not here, for he has risen.”)

What does this tell us about Lazarus’s power over death, and Jesus’s power over death?

While Lazarus was dead for four days, Jesus rose on the third day after death. What statement might Jesus be making here about his victory over death itself?
What happened to the linens on Lazarus's body and face? (They still bound him up and had to be removed.)

What happened to the linens that had been used to wrap Jesus's body? (They were lying in the tomb, and the face cloth was folded and laid by itself.)

While Lazarus's resurrection was certainly a foretaste of the future of all believers, it also foreshadowed and contrasted with Jesus's own death, burial, and resurrection.

Lazarus needed someone to move the stone so he could come out; Jesus came out of the tomb through the stone itself. Lazarus was still wrapped and bound with linen strips, needing outside assistance; Jesus shed his own linen cloths and neatly folded the face cloth. Lazarus had been dead for four days, helpless against death's decay; Jesus defeated death itself in less time than this, only three days. Jesus, as Almighty God, has the final authority over all things, even death.

For a person who is fearful about death or has experienced death's sting, how does Jesus's victory and power over death itself bring confidence and peace?

Caiaphas, the High Priest, ironically became an unwitting prophet when he told the group it was better for one man to die than the whole nation to perish. And here, the majesty and sovereignty of God takes center stage. While these Jews believe that they are scripting the plot, they don't know that they are in a much larger story, with a much wiser author. They think they are pulling the strings, but “He who sits in the heavens laughs” (Psalm 2:4).

What does it reveal about the hardness of the Pharisees' hearts that even a man raised from the dead does not incite belief in them? (They are blind and hardened. They're so concerned with their own motivations, they don't marvel.)

When is your heart hard like the Pharisees' hearts? In what ways do you see God's wondrous work, but fail to believe or marvel?

According to verse 52, why must Jesus die? (“To gather into one the children of God.” To bring both Jews and Gentiles into the Family of God.)

As the Pharisees plotted his death, how did this change Jesus's approach to life? (He no longer walked openly among them.)

Jesus's death gathered both Jews and Gentiles into the Family of God. What do these extreme measures reveal about God's heart for his family?
How has being part of God’s family affected your day-to-day life?

LAST WORD

Though his friend Lazarus was near death, Jesus chose to express his love for Lazarus and his family by not healing him. While they didn’t immediately understand it in the midst of their grief, Jesus had their ultimate good in mind. He was about to give them a great part to play in the story of redemption.

After Lazarus’s death, Jesus handled both Martha and Mary with individual tenderness and wise care. He identified with them in their pain, spoke words of comfort and truth, and grieved at the fallen nature of humanity. In a grand moment, Jesus commanded Lazarus to rise and come out of the tomb. Lazarus’s resurrection was a foretaste of the future of all believers. Those in Christ will never taste death; one day, we will rise with resurrected bodies.

Lazarus’s death was ultimately a great catalyst for Jesus’s own death. He knew that when he performed this feat over death on Lazarus’s behalf, the Pharisees and Jews would plot to kill him. But Jesus chose to do this, rather than hide in fear or refuse to go to his friends. It’s a picture of the gospel: “I’ll trade my life for yours. I will raise you, and they will kill me.” Jesus knew that in a short time, he would be the one embracing death to give us life.

Though we often don’t understand what he is doing in the moment, following Jesus means walking by faith. Tony put it this way: “Faith means that you’re acting like God is telling the truth.” We trust Jesus through the difficult times, knowing that He is working all things to bring redemption and give us eternal life. As we close our study on the first half of the Gospel of John, consider your own life. Do you trust him? Are you following him in faith?

We look forward to walking with you through the second half of the Gospel of John.

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before next week.

Pray: Talk to God about the way he sometimes answers your prayers differently than you would like. Acknowledge that he is God and knows best, and ask him to help you trust him, even when his answers are painful in the moment.

Create: Sculpt a small vase out of clay, or find one in your cupboards to display. Let it remind you of the way God saves your tears in his bottle; he doesn’t waste pain with his children. It can also be a reminder of Jesus’s own tears at the grief of sin and death, and his willingness to go to the cross for you so your tears will one day be wiped away forever.

Journal: Do you tend to doubt God’s love and character in the midst of suffering and grief? Do you pour your heart out to him in trust? Do you bring accusation against him? How might he be working behind the scenes to bring you to greater belief?
SESSION BIG IDEA
Because Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in him will never taste death.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN THE VIDEO
What does the person who has faith in Christ never experience?

What comes before seeing?

Why does Jesus perform his works?

PERSONAL REFLECTION
Have you ever experienced a trial or season of suffering that caused you to doubt God’s character or His love toward you? What happened in that time?

How does the fact that Christians will never taste death change your perspective on bodily death, or your fear of it?

LIVE IT OUT
Select at least one activity to complete.

Pray: Talk to God about the way he sometimes answers your prayers differently than you would like. Acknowledge that he is God and knows best, and ask him to help you trust him, even when his answers are painful in the moment.

Create: Sculpt a small vase or bottle out of clay, or find one in your cupboards to display. Let it remind you of the way God saves your tears in his bottle; he doesn’t waste pain with his children. It can also be a reminder of Jesus’s own tears at the grief of sin and death, and his willingness to go to the cross for you so your tears will one day be wiped away forever.

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