

Union United Methodist Church
Spring FOCUS Bible School, 2023
FOCUS: Followers of Christ Understanding Scripture
Study: Gospel of John

Week 1: March 1, 2023

Introduction, Purpose of John, and John 1

This Week's Study: **John 1**

Prepared by Pastor Michael Larbi

1. Introduction: Study Method

○ Recall: Study Method

This Bible School will follow a three-part sequence:

a. Weekly Short Lecture

This will be on Wednesday evenings and will give an overview of the theme for the chapters we are studying in the week following that meeting.

b. Personal Study

There will be an outline with a breakdown for day-by-day personal study at home of the chapters being covered that week

c. Fellowship Time & Group Discussion

We shall have small group discussions on the following Wednesday to share what we have each learned over the previous week.

○ Recall: Individual Study Guide

In your daily study, you might find it helpful to

○ **Invest about 30 minutes** into this each day, or longer if you're able to

○ **Start with prayer**, asking for the Lord to illuminate the scripture more clearly to you at this time.

○ **Read the text slowly a number of times**, if possible, from two or three versions

○ **Reflection:** ask yourself the following questions, where possible

a. who is speaking

b. who is being spoken to or what is the content about

c. what does the text say about God, i.e., God's nature, God's views, etc.

- d. what does it say to me about my life and circumstances or the world we live in, etc.
- e. personal application: what is the Lord teaching me today from this text, and what am I going to do about it?
- f. Any other questions that come to mind as you reflect on the scripture.

Journal: You may find it helpful to keep a study journal in which you write down what you receive through this process of prayer, reflection, meditation

- **Close with prayer**, a time of prayer inspired by what you have gleaned from the study.
Could be a prayer of thanksgiving, praise to God, repentance from something the Lord shows you is wrong, prayer for guidance, prayer of submission to God's will, or however else you are inspired to pray.

2. Introduction: Overview of the Gospel of John

- **The Purpose of the Gospel of John**

To appreciate John's Gospel, it helps to start from the purpose of the book as stated by the author:

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31But **these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.**" John 20:30-31 NRSV

So, the purpose is that by reading about the "signs" we may

- **Believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (Identity of Jesus)**
- **Through our faith in Jesus, we may obtain eternal life in the name of Jesus.** (Purpose of Jesus)

○ **Jesus' Identity: 7 "I AM" statements.**

There are 7 important I AM statements that Jesus made in John that leads us to conclude that Jesus is both the Messiah and the Son of God. These are:

1. I am the bread of life (6:48)
2. I am the light of the world (8:12, 9:5)
3. I am the door for the sheep (10:7,9)
4. I am the good shepherd (10:11,14)
5. I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)
6. I am the way, the truth and the life (14:6)
7. I am the true vine (15:1)

Some count as many as 49 times Jesus used the phrase "I am" in John. To appreciate the significance of the I AM statements, remember this interaction between the Lord and Moses:

- Exodus 3:13 But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" **14God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'** "

Other instances include:

- God also spoke to Moses and said to him: **אֲנִי יְהוָה**
"I am the Lord." Exodus 6:2 NRSV

This phrase, "I am the Lord" appears throughout the instructions of the Law Moses gave to Israel.

"I am the Lord your God (**אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ**), who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 7you shall have no other gods before me." Deuteronomy 5:6 NRSV

- "See now **that I, even I, am he**; there is no god besides me."
Deuteronomy 32:39 NRSV
- "Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called:
I am He; I am the first, and I am the last."
Isaiah 48:12 NRSV

This is one reason the Jews hated Jesus - they thought he was blaspheming because he used I AM statements and thus equated himself with God, which indeed is true - He was God incarnate (God taking on human form).

- **Jesus' Identity & Purpose: 7 Important Signs Confirming Jesus as Messiah.**
 1. Wedding at Cana: Changing Water Into Wine (John 2:1-11)
 2. Healing the Royal Official's Son (John 4:46-54)
 3. Healing the paralytic at the pool (John 5:1-18)
 4. Feeding over 5,000 with fish and loaves (John 6:1-14)
 5. Walking on the water (John 6:15-25)
 6. Healing a man born blind (John 9:1-41)
 7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46)

The table below gives a breakdown of the chapters of John, with themes that we shall be exploring in this study. We shall cover one theme per week.

From	To	Theme
1	1	Who Jesus Is; First Disciples Sign 1: Wedding at Cana; New Birth
2	3	Sign 2: Royal Official's Son; Samaritan Woman at the well Sign 3: Healing at Bethesda on Sabbath day
4	5	Sign 4: Jesus Feeds 5,000; Bread of Life Sign 5: Jesus walks on water; water & light teachings,
5	7	Jesus at feast of tabernacles; Adulterous woman
9	11	Sign 6: Healing of man born blind/

		Sign 7: Lazarus raised from the dead
		Anointing; Triumphal Entry
12	13	Last Supper
14	14	Jesus Teaches – good Shepherd, on heaven, keep his words, etc.
15	15	Jacob's Family; Reconciliation with Esau
16	17	Teaching discourse and prayer
18	19	Jesus is arrested, tried, mocked, crucified, buried
20	20	Jesus' resurrection; appears to witnesses.
21	21	Second ending of gospel; Jesus appears in Galilee

2. John 1 Overview

- **Prologue: 1:1-18**

- **Who Jesus Is: Jesus is God, there in the beginning.**

The first three verses of this book take us back to the Genesis narrative of the beginning of the universe created by God.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning. 3Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

John 1:1-3 NIV

"No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known."

1:18 NIV

- **What makes Jesus different from all others.**

- **Eternal life in Jesus**

4In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The life being referenced here is divine eternal life.

Greek, the original language of the New Testament, has at least 3 words to describe life: bios, zōē, psuchē¹

All these words are found in the NT, and the context helps with their meaning.

- **psuchē** - means our “natural life” or “personality”²
- **bios** - describes a person’s “livelihood” or “physical sustenance.”³
- **zōē** - this is used to denote “**divine, eternal life**” - **the life of God**⁴

“In him was life [zōē], and that life was the light of all mankind.”

John 1:4 NIV

Same word is seen in John 3:16 and John 10:10, for instance.

John the Baptist was sent by God to bear witness to the light but was not the light John 1:6-7.

- **Jesus was Incarnated**

This means that Jesus is God in the form of a human being .

He came bearing divine ability (grace) and truth.

1:14 **The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.** We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who **came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

Philippians 2:5-8 (which some believe to be a hymn in the early days of the church) sheds more light on this incarnation.

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
6who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
7but emptied himself,

¹ Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined And Explained

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
8he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross”. Philippians 2:5-8

- **Jesus, full of grace, Imparts Grace and Truth to us.**

16From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (NRSV)

1:16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (NIV)

In the Old Testament, God gave us the Divine Moral Law through Moses. As Paul explains in Romans (particularly in chapter 7), the law is virtually impossible to obey completely and live by due to the struggles of the human nature.

Here John says that Jesus brought us grace and truth. This is what enables us to live by and meet God’s righteous requirements proclaimed to us in the laws. As Paul puts it,
“So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. **24Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!**”
Romans 7:21-25 NRSV.

How are we rescued from the body of death?
Jesus brought us grace and truth that sets us free!

- **Jesus was not well received by many**

1:10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. NRSV

- **By receiving and believing in Jesus the Christ, we become children of God**

1:12 But **to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,** 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. NRSV

- **John the Baptist and His Faithful Witness - Pointing to Jesus - 1:19-34**

John was Jesus' cousin, the son of Elizabeth.

However, he was called to be a witness to the coming Christ.

1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.** 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 NRSV

- **John was humble and faithful to his calling.**

1:19 the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' "

- **John's ministry started before that of Jesus. Yet, he was quick to point out Christ Jesus to people.**

1:29The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared,
"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

- He knew his place, and did not attempt to compete with Christ.

30This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'

- The true identity of Jesus the Christ was pointed out to John by God

1:32And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

It is only the Holy Spirit who reveals the true identity and power of Christ to people. We see that happen with John. They were cousins but he did not know until it was revealed to him.

- Knowing that Jesus was the Lamb of God, John did not withhold anything from Jesus, including his disciples:

35The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" 37The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

- **1:36-51 Call of Jesus' First Disciples**

- Some followed because they heard John's testimony of Jesus

1:35 The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. NRSV

This is a great example of how we evangelize and invite people to come to Jesus and be saved. Our testimony and witness about Jesus can draw people to Christ.

Jesus, in talking about his impending death, said:

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." John 12:32 NRSV

Though this refers to his death on the cross, it also indicates how people are drawn to Christ. We should exalt Jesus and testify of his grace and truth.

- **Some who followed Jesus, testified and others came to Christ. Jesus does the rest.**

1:40 One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). 42 He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter) NRSV

- **Some are called directly by the Lord**

1:43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."

- **Some are skeptical but the Lord can win them over!**

45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can

anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" 48Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

- **The Lord Calls, "Come and See!"**

1:36 as he [John] watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" 37The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. 38When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "**Rabbi**" (which translated means Teacher), "**where are you staying?**" 39**He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw** where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon." NRSV

The Lord invites us all to a life and walk of faith. He does not give us all the answers at the start of our journey. We are invited to come and see, to come and walk with the Lord and experience an amazing journey with Jesus, the Christ.

Who can doubt that over the next 3 years and beyond, these early disciples saw amazing things! We are going to join for the rest of this study of the Gospel of Joh.

3. Daily Study Schedule & Questions

- **Day 1 to 3: Overview of John**

Please go over the I AM statements listed in the overview of John given above. It would be helpful to read through the some of the situations where Jesus uses "I AM" statements. Note any themes that stand out to you about who Jesus is. What does Jesus being the Christ, God incarnate, mean for you?

- **Day 4-5: Signs affirming Jesus' Identity and Purpose**

Pick a couple of the stories that John says are signs of Jesus's identity and purpose (Messiah, savior, etc.). Note any themes that stand out to you about who Jesus is.