

REASONS

OF BELIEVE

EVIDENCE JESUS IS GOD'S SON

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Reasons to Believe • Evidence Jesus Is God's Son
Adult Bible Study Leader's Guide

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Contents



| | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Lesson 1 | The Case for Christ | 9 |
| Lesson 2 | The Word Came Down | 17 |
| Lesson 3 | Meet the Word | 25 |
| Lesson 4 | Jesus Transforms | 33 |
| Lesson 5 | Jesus' Word Is Power | 41 |
| Lesson 6 | Jesus Offers New Life | 50 |
| Lesson 7 | Jesus' Invitations | 59 |
| Lesson 8 | Jesus, Sacrificial Shepherd | 68 |
| Lesson 9 | Jesus Is the Resurrection | 77 |
| Lesson 10 | Jesus Models Servanthood | 86 |
| Lesson 11 | Jesus Teaches on Relationships | 94 |
| Lesson 12 | Jesus Died Voluntarily | 102 |
| Lesson 13 | Resurrection and Restoration | 110 |

How to Use *Truth for Living*

Truth for Living:

A comprehensive, trustworthy curriculum that presents the truth of God's Word without compromise. The curriculum plan includes through-the-Bible courses as well as topical courses. Perfect for adults who want a guide in using all of God's Word as God intended.

As you prepare to teach these lessons, keep these two factors in mind:

- The FOCUS of productive adult Bible learning is the learner. The intent of teaching is not teaching, but learning—the learner's learning.
- The GOAL of productive adult Bible learning is an appropriate life-response to Biblical truth. You do not teach simply to impart information; you teach so that the Holy Spirit of God can use the truths of the Word of God to change the child of God into the image of the Son of God.

The Lesson Plan

Each *Truth for Living* lesson has three distinct parts. GETTING STARTED is the attention-getter. The questions and activities “set the table,” as it were, for the study. SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES is the heart of the lesson. A series of study questions leads the teacher and learners through the Biblical text. MAKING IT PERSONAL applies the truth to life.

As is true of any teaching experience, you can adapt the parts of the lesson to fit your particular class. You may choose to alter the beginning activities or change the focus of the application. You will find more material in the study than you can probably cover in one class session.

The Study Book

This leader's guide is designed to accompany the Bible study book. We encourage you to distribute Bible study books to your learners. Urge them to complete the study before class. The more your learners have studied on their own, the better the class discussions will be. Most of the questions in the leader's guide are picked up from the Bible study book. You will notice the question numbers in parentheses after the questions. The answers to the questions are in italics following the questions.

Other Resources

The resource CD has PowerPoint presentations for every lesson. They incorporate the resource visuals and provide a good way for teachers and learners to track the lesson. The resource CD also has Prezi presentations for some of the lessons. Instructions for using the Prezi presentations are on the CD. Other resources include lesson outlines, case studies, and verse cards.

Preface

The apostle John wrote the fourth Gospel with clear intention. He wanted his readers to know for sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And more importantly, he wanted them to believe in Jesus so they might have life through His name (John 20:30, 31). John accomplished his goal. His Gospel serves as a convincing testimony to Who Jesus is.

This course will help you lead your learners to discover the Gospel of John. It presents John's seven evidences, known as signs, as well as Jesus' seven *I am* sayings. Together the signs and sayings give a complete picture of Jesus. Believers in your class will be strengthened in their faith in Jesus and challenged to take their mission from Him seriously. Learners who are not sure of their salvation will be confronted with the clear evidence of Jesus' identity and will be encouraged to put their faith in Jesus for salvation.

John's Gospel is a powerful tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Pray that your learners will respond to its message as you guide them through it.



The Case for Christ



Topic

The Gospel of John

Theme

The Gospel of John provides a strong case for Jesus' identity and His provision of salvation.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will purpose to use the Gospel of John as a witnessing tool.

Materials

- Resources 1, 2, and 4

Scripture Focus

Overview of John

Summary

This lesson shows *why* John wrote his Gospel so the learner will be able to study that Gospel according to John's purpose. John 20:30 and 31 tell us that John recorded certain signs in his Gospel so that his readers might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. This lesson also explains *what* a Gospel is and then shows *how* John put his Gospel together.

Outline

I. Author

II. Purposes

- To present evidence
- To encourage belief
- To offer eternal life

III. Historical Background

- Jewish sects
- Jewish political groups
- Jewish institutions

IV. Structure

Memory Verses

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30, 31).

GETTING STARTED

How-to Writers

Read the following list of experts. Pause between each one to let your learners give the person's expertise and suggest a title for a how-to book the person could have written in his or her lifetime.

- Rusty Wallace (race car driver)
- Vincent Van Gogh (artist)
- Bill Gates (business mogul)
- Orville and Wilber Wright (pioneers in flight)
- C. S. Lewis (author)
- David Beckham (soccer player)
- Henry Ford (car manufacturer)

ASK: Which of the how-to books would you read? Explain.

ASK: Which ones would be timeless?

The Gospel of John is essentially a how-to book on the gospel message. John, one of Jesus' disciples, wrote the gospel under the direction of the Holy Spirit so that his readers might know they have eternal life (John 20:30, 31). The Gospel of John is timeless, continuing to serve its purpose and bring about results. It is well worth our study.

The Experts Say

Read the following fictional statements as if they were true. Notice that all the statements are written as an expert opinion. Watch your learners for their reactions. Do their expressions indicate they believe the statements?

- Experts say that the earth is beginning to flatten due to an increase in the earth's gravitational pull.
- According to experts, ninety-eight percent of the earth's water will be undrinkable by the year 2040.
- Experts now consider cheese to be the number one cause of heart disease.
- Medical experts have discovered growing facial hair could add up to twelve years to one's life.
- Expert researchers predict that bowling will eclipse baseball as the most popular sport in American by the year 2035.

ASK: What was your first instinct when I read these statements? Did you think about the ramifications of what the experts said or did you question the experts?

ASK: Which statement seemed most plausible?

Assure your learners that all of the statements are made up. The exercise shows how easily we buy into a statement that supposedly comes from experts. As we embark on our study of John, we can be assured of its contents. John

wrote as an expert on Christ and the gospel. And his words were also guided by the Holy Spirit. We should approach this study with complete confidence in John's Gospel. He wrote confidently so we might know the truth about Christ (John 20:30, 31).

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Before beginning a study on the Gospel of John, we need to realize that it is more than another telling of Jesus' life on earth. It is a theological biography, meaning John recorded his theological understanding of the Person and work of Jesus. Everything that John included is intended to teach us something about Who Jesus is and why His identity is important for us.

John's Gospel is also a narrative. Jesus is the important person in the story and in the episodes. John's Gospel is not a source of insight about ourselves. For example, the narrative of Jesus' calming a storm on the Sea of Galilee is not about storms in our lives. Rather, this sign shows us something about Jesus.

I. Author

The evidence that the apostle John wrote the Gospel of John is solid. The writer had to be a Palestinian Jew who observed Christ as part of His closest circle of followers and was later commissioned by Christ as an apostle. Only Peter, James, and John fit those requirements. Peter is named in the Gospel, and James had already been martyred by the time the Gospel was written. That leaves John as the only logical choice for author.

John was one of the few who witnessed the full range of Christ's actions, including the raising of Jairus's daughter, the Transfiguration, and His prayer in Gethsemane. He had gone to the tomb and had observed that Jesus was raised from the dead. He was with Christ more than any of the other disciples as the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 19:26, 27). He was therefore well qualified to write authoritatively on Christ's life.

II. Purposes

John 20:30 and 31 tell us why, humanly speaking, John decided to write his Gospel.

A. To present evidence

READ: John 20:30.

John made three important statements about Jesus and signs in John 20:30. Each of the statements helps us understand John's first purpose for writing his gospel: to present evidence concerning Jesus.

The first statement says that Jesus did many *signs*. John referred to Jesus' miracles as *signs* because the word stresses the functional aspect of a miracle as a discernible indication that draws attention to the significance of the action. It implies that there is some meaning behind the miracle. It focuses then, not on the miracle only or even primarily, but on the meaning or significance behind it. So the reader should ask, Who is this Jesus Who did the miracles? And what do the miracles reveal about Him?

ASK: What does the typical person tend to focus on when he reads one of Jesus' miracles? (Q3) *Jesus' power or the response of those who witnessed the miracle.*

The second statement says that Jesus did the signs in the presence of His disciples. They served as witnesses to His miracles, making the signs valid.

The third statement says that John did not record all of the miracles that Jesus performed. He wrote later that if all the things Jesus had done were written, the world could not contain the books needed to record them (21:25). John selected seven specific miracles to serve as signs for his readers.

RESOURCE: Display resource 2 with the bottom half covered. Point out the seven specific miracles in the book of John.

B. To encourage belief

READ: John 20:31.

John recorded the seven signs so his readers might believe. So it is necessary to know what *believe* means. *Believe* denotes the orientation of the mind and heart toward something or someone. It is not mere assent to propositions about someone. It is not just an emotion or an emotional feeling. It involves cognitive knowledge, which should lead to commitment.

ASK: Does your belief in Jesus go beyond mere assent to propositions about Him? If not, why not? (Q4)

John explained the stages of belief concerning Jesus. The stages involve believing *about* Jesus and then believing *in* Jesus.

ASK: What is the difference between believing something *about* someone and believing *in* someone? (Q5) *Believing about* is an intellectual assent that something is true. *Believing in* is a matter of trust and dependence.

John wanted his readers to believe two things *about* Jesus: He is the Messiah and He is the Son of God. *Messiah*, which means *anointed*, refers to Jesus as the descendant of David Who would come and restore the kingdom of Israel. He would fulfill the messianic hopes of the Old Testament. The term *Son of God* points to the unique relationship that Jesus has with God, His Father. Jesus is God's only begotten, or unique, Son (3:16). John asserted Jesus' unique relationship to the Father throughout his Gospel.

The stage of belief *about* Jesus leads to confidence in Jesus. But John wanted his readers to move beyond confidence to believe *in* Jesus. This stage involves commitment to and trustful reliance on Jesus. In John's Gospel we do not always find people responding to Jesus with this kind of commitment and reliance. Not everyone who heard Jesus and believed had life-giving belief.

READ: John 2:23–25. **ASK:** How did Jesus respond to those who superficially believed in His name after they saw Him perform miracles? (Q6) *He did not commit Himself to them, or believe in their belief.*



John used the word *believe* ninety-eight times in this Gospel, but he did not use the term *belief*.

READ: John 8:44. **ASK:** Why would Jesus call superficial believers offspring of the devil? (Q7) *Because they, like the devil, had no truth in them.*

Initial faith does not always turn out to be saving faith. This study of John will help us understand genuine saving belief *in* Jesus. It will challenge us to make sure our faith in Jesus is genuine.

C. To offer eternal life

John wanted his readers to believe Jesus is the Son of God so they might have *life*. Life is one of John's key concepts. In his Gospel *life* characteristically refers to eternal life. Simply put, eternal life comes by trusting in Jesus as a result of the revelation of Who He is and what He has done. John's readers could not receive life by any other means. No personal effort or action could merit eternal life.

Eternal life is resurrection life. It comes after physical death or after the Rapture for those who are living when Christ returns for His church. It continues without ceasing. Eternal life's quality, however, is just as important as its quantity. Being in God's presence forever in Heaven will make eternal life the best it could be.

READ: John 17:3. **ASK:** How did Jesus define eternal life? (Q8) *Knowing both God and Christ.*

ASK: How does Jesus' definition help you put eternal life into its proper perspective? (Q9)

Since the only way to know God is through Jesus, His Son, we must believe that Jesus is His Son. To know God both changes us and introduces us to a different quality of living. Consequently, we can begin to experience eternal life presently. However, we will not experience it fully until we are living in Heaven.

RESOURCE: Display resource 4 to summarize the purpose of the Gospel of John.

Signs, *believe*, and *life* are key words to understanding the structure of the Gospel of John. In the *signs* we see the revelation of God in Jesus. The signs should produce the response of *believing*. *Life* is the result of believing. We must note, however, that the wrong response—rejection—brings an opposite result, death. Throughout the narrative John presented both responses with their corresponding results.

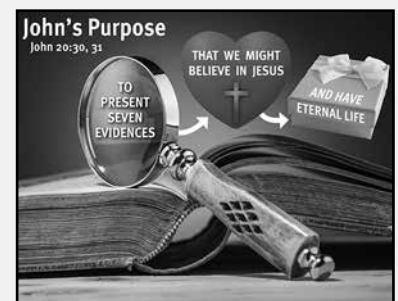
III. Historical Background

Learning the historical background for the Gospel of John will help us better understand Jesus' interaction with certain political groups and institutions. The Judaism of His day was different than the Judaism at the close of the Old Testament. Jesus made it clear that He did not approve of what it had become.

A. Jewish sects

The Pharisees might have come from a group of pious Jews who in the day of Antiochus IV stayed true to the law. If so, they had an admirable beginning. But by the time of Christ, their practice had degenerated to a dead, heartless religion.

John used the word *life* thirty-six times in his Gospel.



Their devotion was to themselves, not God. They lorded themselves over the Jews, demanding God's people keep the traditions, called the Mishnah, that they had added to the law of Moses.

The Pharisees saw Jesus as competition. He rejected their traditions and exposed their hypocrisy. John records that the Pharisees eventually sought to kill Jesus so that the Jews would not believe in Him (John 11:47–54). They were worried a large Jewish following might cause a political disruption that the Romans would have to step in and control. Roman intervention could mean the Pharisees would lose their power. To the Pharisees, power was more important than knowing the truth about God and Christ.

ASK: How would you expect Jesus to respond to the Pharisees' religious leadership of the Jews? (Q10)

In demonstration of the power of the gospel, some Pharisees, like Nicodemus, trusted in Jesus for salvation, but most vehemently opposed Jesus throughout His ministry.

John does not mention the Sadducees specifically in his Gospel, yet they were an important part of the political and religious setting of Jesus' day. They were worldly-minded and materialistic aristocrats of Jewish society. And since they didn't leave written records explaining their beliefs, they are known mostly for what their critics said about them. Consequently, we know more about what they denied, such as the supernatural and the resurrection, than we do about what they affirmed (Matt. 22:23; Acts 23:8). Obviously they rejected Christ and His signs and, like the Pharisees, saw Him as a threat. They shared the Pharisees' desire to stamp out Christ and His followers. However, they didn't agree with the Pharisees on much else. For the most part, the two groups did not get along.

Scribes were responsible for making copies of what we now call the Old Testament. They took extreme care in making sure their copies were accurate, even going so far as to count every single letter of a copy to make sure all were right. Since Hebrew letters were also used for numbers, they could add up the numbers represented by the letters to make certain the total was correct after they had finished their copy.

The scribes' meticulous attention to details in the Scriptures meant they knew the law of Moses well. They used their knowledge to try to trap Jesus. John mentioned one such entrapment attempt concerning the appropriate punishment for a woman caught in adultery (John 8:3–6).

READ: John 8:3–6. **ASK:** Why would the scribes want to entrap Jesus? (Q11)
To be able to accuse Jesus of doing something wrong and thereby discredit and silence Him.

B. Jewish political groups

The New Testament mentions two Jewish political groups. The first is the Herodians, a Jewish party who supported King Herod. Their jobs were tied to Herod's continued reign. So they had a vested interest in keeping Jesus from gaining followers. They were the ones who questioned Jesus about paying taxes to Caesar (Matt. 22:16, 17). They, like the scribes and Pharisees, wanted to trap Jesus

in His words so they might discredit Him and have reason to destroy Him (Mark 3:6; 12:13). John does not refer to this group specifically in his Gospel, though they certainly played a role in the background.

The publicans were Jews who collected taxes from their fellow Jews on behalf of Rome. At times the Romans allowed them to collect more than they needed to. They pocketed the extra money, making them despised by their countrymen as traitors. Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples, was a publican before he trusted in Christ. He became an apostle (Matt. 10:3) and the writer of the Gospel of Matthew.

READ: Mark 2:13–17. **ASK:** What about Jesus made Him particularly appealing to tax collectors? (Q12) *He offered them forgiveness and an answer to the emptiness of a life of dishonest gain.*

C. Jewish institutions

The Sanhedrin, a seventy-member council of Jewish leaders, was the Jews' supreme authority of Jesus' day. The council included Sadducees and Pharisees with the high priest as its leader. Rome allowed the Sanhedrin to operate, but they did not give them the power to apply the death penalty. That is why the Sanhedrin went to Pilate to get his permission to crucify Christ (John 18:28–19:16).

READ: John 19:10, 11. **ASK:** From where did Pilate's authority to kill Jesus come? (Q13) *From God the Father. Pilate could not have authorized the Jews to kill Jesus if it had not been God's will.*

Another Jewish institution was the synagogue. Jews in captivity in Babylon near the close of the Old Testament met together for instruction, public worship, and prayer. Their meeting places became known as synagogues. By the time Jesus came onto the scene, most cities with even a small number of Jews had synagogues. Jesus often went to synagogues to teach (18:20). Consequently, Jesus' doctrine was no secret.

IV. Structure

John wrote his Gospel with a definite structure to facilitate his reasons for writing it. Understanding that structure helps us know how the passages within the book relate to one another. The Book of Signs (1:19–12:50) and The Book of Glory (13:1–20:31) are John's two major sections. A prologue (1:1–18) precedes these sections, and an epilogue (21:1–25) follows them.

The prologue serves as an introduction to the book's story and the themes that John developed in the rest of the book. It is a snapshot of the book and states truths that John proved in the remainder of the Gospel.

The Book of Signs (1:19–12:50) contains the seven representative signs that John chose to record. In addition, it includes Jesus' seven *I am* sayings. Both the signs and the sayings support the claim that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

RESOURCE: Display resource 2 to review the seven signs and seven sayings in the book of John.

In the Book of Glory, John described Jesus' private time with His disciples (13:1–17:26) and declared Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection (18:1–20:31). Jesus



prepared His disciples for His death (13:1–16:33) and then prayed for them (17:1–26). Jesus explained the ministry of the Holy Spirit as *paraclete* in their lives and service.

The epilogue contains the account of Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to the disciples (21:1–14) and His restoration of Peter to leadership among the disciples (21:15–19).

MAKING IT PERSONAL

As we study John's Gospel we should keep in mind that he recorded miracles as signs so his readers might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and so they could, therefore, have eternal life. Secondly we need to remember that John wrote his Gospel as a story that presents a theological understanding of Jesus' words and works. Lastly we need to know that John wrote with a purposeful structure to support his arguments.

Genuine Belief

ASK: How might a genuine belief in Jesus be evident in a person's life? (Q14)

ASK: What evidence in your life shows that you believe in Jesus with your heart instead of just your head? (Q15)

Never assume all your learners are genuine believers. Some might be assenting to facts about Jesus without ever trusting in Christ as their Savior. Pray for your class regularly throughout this quarter, asking God to reveal Himself to those who do not yet know Him and to strengthen the faith of those who do.

John as a Witnessing Tool

ASK: How might understanding the arguments and organization of the book of John help you in your witnessing efforts? (Q16)

ASK: Identify one person with whom you will purpose to share the message of the Gospel of John. (Q17)

Summary and Memory Verses

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add the following truth concerning Jesus: Jesus proved He is God's Son.

Encourage learners to memorize John 20:30 and 31. Give them an opportunity to say the verses in class next week.

