

DAY ONE—START BY READING!

The best way to begin study of a book is to read it! Whether you've read the gospel of John multiple times or never, give yourself this day to a rather quick read-through of chapters I–IO. Jot down initial thoughts and observations on the facing page.

DAY TWO—READ ON!

Continue encountering this gospel in full, as you complete a quick read-through of chapters II-2I. Again, jot down initial thoughts and observations on the facing page.

DAY THREE—WHAT AND WHO?

 This is one book whose main idea we don't have to guess. Toward the end, the author clearly states his aim. Read John 20:30-31. Memorize verse 31, and

then write it out by memory. Underline words that stand out as key.

The gospel itself will open the meanings of these key words as we study. John's aim in writing will be continually evident, as he draws his reader to believe in who Jesus is and so find life in his name. For now, stop to say and pray again the words of John 20:31, asking that its aim will be accomplished in you and in others who read these Spirit-inspired words.

For reflection: Consider this not as an aim accomplished in a moment, but rather as an aim whose accomplishment begins and then continues through a lifetime into eternity.

2. In general, what aspects of this gospel did you notice in your initial reading that seem to reflect the purpose statement found in John 20:31?

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3. Clear evidence has led many biblical scholars to conclude that it was the apostle John whom the Spirit led to establish this aim and develop a gospel around it, mentioning himself in this gospel only indirectly. If this is true (and so we shall assume in this study), what basic observations might you make about this author, from John 13:21–25; 19:26–27; 20:1–9; 21:20–24? See also Mark 1:16–20, I John 1:1–3, and Revelation 1:1–2.

4. Read or review the Introduction to this study, for other initial context.

Day Four—In the Beginning

As we open to the book's prologue, it is important to acknowledge that the whole book will unfold this prologue; at the start we will aim to understand it enough to be ready to understand it better and better.

I. This study's Introduction mentions some of the ways in which this gospel differs, particularly in its opening, from the other gospels. Read John 1:1–18, the book's prologue.

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How would you describe John's method of introducing Jesus in this gospel? What is the general effect?

- 2. The prologue presents first and foremost the *Word* (Greek *logos*—which has many connotations, including the most basic one of expressing oneself through speech).
 - a. Write down everything you can learn about this Word from John 1:1-5.

b. What connections might you note between John I:I-5 and Genesis I:I-5?

c. What understanding of the Word does the Old Testament bring to the New? Besides Genesis I, see also Psalm 33:4, 6 and Psalm 107:17–20.

d. Considering the previous parts of this question, write down some thoughts on what it means that Jesus is the Word (as is finally clarified in John 1:14ff).

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e. John I:I4 tells us that this Word was made flesh. How does expressing the incarnation in these words help communicate its awesome meaning?

3. In Colossians I:15–I7 and Hebrews I:1–3a, what similar claims do you find concerning who Jesus is?

4. In John 1:4–9, the image of light emerges—an image that reappears in this book and throughout Scripture. Trace the light through these verses. What does this

image show us, and how does it reveal Jesus to us? How, too, might this light take us back to Genesis 1?

- 5. Let us recall John 20:31 at this point, which tells us that this gospel is written so that the readers will *believe* in *who Jesus is* and so find *life in his name*. In light of these key elements of John's theme, examine John 1:1–13.
 - a. How do the elements of John's theme emerge right from the start?

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b. In many ancient cultures, one's *name* was not just a title; it represented the essence of one's being or character. How does the prologue lay the foundation for true belief in Jesus' name?

c. How does John the Baptist in particular come on the stage bearing the message of John 20:31 (see vv. 6–8, 15)? What is John the Baptist's main role?

Day Five—Finishing with the Prologue

I. One can of course never "finish" with John's prologue; it is deep and, in many ways, beyond our understanding. Even in his profundity, however, John takes care to be as clear as possible. One way he does this throughout the book is by immediately clarifying his

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positive statements with negative ones. For example, how do the negatives help clarify the positives in John 1:3, 5, 7-8?

2. The prologue tells what happened when this Word came into the world. How does John 1:9–10 make vivid both his coming and the response to his coming? How does John 1:11 make the tragedy of the response even more vivid?

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3. In contrast, how does John I:12-13 make vivid both the opposite response and then the result of that response? We shall see this result explained more fully throughout the gospel, but what do these verses tell us about the result?

- 4. The remaining verses of the prologue (John 1:14–18) stop to celebrate this Word's coming into the world and what it accomplished from the perspective of those who have received him and believed in his name. Consider what Jesus enabled believers to see.
 - a. What Jesus lets us see had been glimpsed before. People saw the revelation of God's very being (his glory) in the Old Testament as well—but not fully. His glory was glimpsed in a tabernacle. That glimpse pointed ahead to Jesus who, according to John I:14, became flesh and dwelt (literally "tabernacled" or "pitched his tent") among us. Read Exodus 25:8 and 40:34–38 and comment.

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b. In John 1:14, 18, what kind of seeing is going on, and how does it depend completely on who Jesus is? Note: The phrase "the only Son from the Father" implies not a created being (recall vv. 1–3), but a unique member of the Godhead. See the same "only" in verse 18 as well.

- 5. Not only what we see but also what we *receive* through Jesus is crucial—and is also the completion of a process this God worked from the beginning, through the Old Testament, finally culminating in his Son. Read John I:14, 16–17.
 - a. What words repeatedly let us know the riches of what we receive through Christ? What do these words mean, and how are they exemplified in God's revelation of himself to us in Christ?

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b. For background read Exodus 33:18–34:9. In what ways was the time of Moses and the law different from the time of Jesus' appearing, and in what ways was it the same?

6. Conclude by rereading John I:I—I8, stopping often to meditate on and thank God for his amazing plan of salvation, accomplished fully in his Son, the Word made flesh.



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