

Abide in Me



Gospel of John Discipleship Study

By Kyle D. Rapinchuk

Abide in Me: Gospel of John Discipleship Study

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Dear friend,

I'm excited you've decided to give this discipleship study a chance. Whether you're an unbeliever who's searching for answers or a new believer seeking some help in beginning your Christian journey or a seasoned believer looking to learn more about Jesus and how to become a disciple-maker, this study is for you. This study will guide you through the Gospel of John over the course of twelve sessions. Since this study is designed for you to complete in the context of a community, we ask that you make a commitment to attend, prepare for, and participate in the study each week so that you and your group can all benefit from one another's insights. One thing we will see in John's gospel is a foundational belief for our study—Jesus changes everything! So we encourage you not only to participate but to prayerfully believe that encountering Jesus in John's gospel and through this group will change you.

In Christ,

Kyle Rapinchuk

Session 1: Introduction

What is the goal of this study?

This study proposes to walk through the Gospel of John in community with an aim at answering certain core questions:

- Who is Jesus?
- What is the gospel?
- What is eternal life and how do I receive it?
- What does it mean to follow Jesus?
- What is a disciple?
- How do I become a disciple-maker?
- How and why should I read the Bible?
- How and why should I pray?

As we explore and answer these questions together, we pray that we will be shaped into a multiplying community that impacts our families, communities, and workplaces.

What is the design of this study?

We will meet for an hour each session. Although the time is scheduled (see below), we want to be flexible during each session based on the quality of conversation. In order for this flexibility to be possible, however, participants need to be on-time and ready to go when the session starts.

Session Overview

| | |
|------------|--|
| 8 minutes | Opening prayer, gospel & discipleship definition, Discipleship Group ?'s |
| 10 minutes | Observation: What do I see? |
| 20 minutes | Interpretation: What does it mean? |
| 20 minutes | Application: How do I apply this? |
| 2 minutes | Prayer |

Gospel Definition

The gospel is the story of Jesus¹ as the resolution of the story of Israel and the whole world.² God created mankind in His image to share in relationship with Him,³ yet we have rebelled against God and separated ourselves from Him. Yet God promised to send a redeemer⁴ who would be king and establish God's kingdom.⁵ After years of waiting, Jesus finally arrives to fulfill God's promise—Jesus, Israel's long-awaited Messiah, is shown to be both Lord⁶ and king⁷ of the whole world through His life,⁸ death,⁹ resurrection,¹⁰ and ascension to the right hand of the Father.

¹John 1-21

²John 10:16; 12:20-23; 1 John 2:2

³John 17

⁴John 3:16; over 20 references in John to Jesus as the one sent from the Father

⁵John 18:36-37

⁶John 1; 8; 10:30; 17

⁷John 18:33-37

⁸John 1-18

⁹John 19

¹⁰John 20

Discipleship Definition

A disciple is a follower of Jesus who imitates Jesus by loving God, loving others, and making disciples. Disciples are characterized by keeping Jesus' commandments,¹¹ abiding in Him and His Word through prayer,¹² and thereby bearing much fruit.¹³

Characteristics of a Disciple

- ❖ Follow (John 1:43; 21:22)
- ❖ Obey (John 13:15; 14:12, 23-24)
- ❖ Abide (John 6:56; 8:31, 47, 51; 15:4, 8)
- ❖ Bear Fruit (John 15:2, 8)
- ❖ Love (John 13:34-35; 15:12)

Discipleship Group Questions

1. How have I demonstrated the characteristics of a disciple this week? How/where am I struggling?
2. How are you doing loving the people God has placed in your life?
3. How has God been speaking to you through your prayer and Scripture reading?¹⁴

¹¹1 John 5

¹²John 15; 1 John 4:12-16

¹³John 15:2, 8

¹⁴Use this question to transition from discipleship group questions into observation time.

Introduction to John

The gospel of John is the most unique of the four gospels. He lacks the birth of Jesus, opting instead to begin with the beginning—of creation, that is. He lacks much of the teaching, parables, and Galilean ministry of Jesus as well. What John does include, however, helps serve his evangelistic purpose. In John 20, near the end of the gospel, John tells his readers why he has written his gospel: “these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). John is likely writing to a Jewish audience who knows the Old Testament promise of a Messiah, but does not yet believe that Jesus is that Messiah. Instead of writing to believers to assure them who Jesus is, John is writing to unbelievers to convince them that their Messiah had come in the person of Jesus Christ. Moreover, John 21:24, possibly an addition from the believing community, says that the testimony of the one bearing witness to these events in the gospel is true. They have perhaps seen the miracles of Jesus, the resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the growth of the church firsthand as evidence that the Messiah had come.

Theological Message

John focuses his attention primarily on two points. First, John is the most detailed gospel with respect to Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem. He spends much of the first half of his book centered on events in Jerusalem rather than Galilee.¹⁵ Second, John spends nearly half his gospel on the time from the last supper until the resurrection, by far the most lengthy such narrative among the gospels. These two points fit well together. John spends much of his time in the first half of the gospel demonstrating how Jesus’ miracles were signs that manifested his glory (John 2:11). John’s reasoning for his emphasis on Jerusalem may be to show that these signs were not merely in the Galilean area. The same people who oppose, arrest, and crucify Jesus in John’s extended narrative in the second half of the book are those who witnessed his miracles in Jerusalem. They cannot be excused for having not seen Jesus’ miraculous signs; it is rather that they failed to respond to the signs as they ought.

With respect to his purpose statement, John makes clear throughout his gospel that Jesus is the promised Old Testament Messiah by his repeated use of the Old Testament in association with Jesus. Unlike the explicit fulfillment passages in Matthew, however, John uses allusions, choosing to apply Old Testament messianic symbols to Jesus. Some examples include the temple (2:19-21), vine (15:1-11), tabernacle (1:14), serpent (3:14), and the Passover lamb. In this manner, John makes explicit that the promised Messiah of the Old Testament is realized in Jesus, which serves to support his evangelistic purpose.

Unique Contribution of John

John has numerous unique contributions on account of his different style and emphasis in his gospel. Among these unique contributions, four stand out. First, John 1 is a significant departure from the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke or Mark’s decision to start with Jesus’ adult ministry. John begins, as the Bible does, in the beginning. His intentional allusion to Genesis 1 sets the stage for Jesus to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament message. More importantly, however, Jesus is not only the fulfillment of a story that began in the beginning, but he himself was in the beginning. John’s revelation in chapter 1 is that Jesus is the Word of God

¹⁵Interestingly, however, Jesus’ first miracle, one that occurs in Cana in Galilee, is recorded only in John.

from all eternity who has taken on human flesh and dwelt among us. Not only was he with God, but he was God and all things were created through him. Paul in Colossians 1 and the author of Hebrews in Hebrews 1 will make similar statements regarding Jesus' creative activity.

Not only is this a unique contribution, but it fits well with a second of John's unique emphases—the divinity of Jesus, particularly through recording Jesus' I AM statements. Not only does 1:1 explicitly state Jesus' divinity, but 1:18 shows that the Son, Jesus Christ, who is God, has made the Father known. John 20:28 also makes Jesus' divinity clear in Thomas's statement, "My Lord, and my God." A major way John demonstrates Jesus' divinity is through a series of "I AM" statements (6:35; 8:12, 28, 58; 15:1-5). The Old Testament regularly refers to God as "I AM" and His revealed name, YHWH, is related to the statement "I AM who I AM." Not only do Jesus' "I AM" statements hint at this relationship, but he more explicitly makes this claim in John 8:58—"before Abraham was, I am." Jesus' identity as the Messiah in John is equally balanced with his divinity.

A third unique contribution is John's use of light and darkness imagery. Among the many interesting aspects of the light and dark imagery is the way John brings it to a climax in the burial account. Throughout the gospel, the echoes of John 1 stir in the reader's mind when these words occur. In John 1, he writes that the true light came into the darkness of the world, but the darkness did not comprehend it (1:4-5, 7-10). The failure of the people to recognize the light of the world showed that they were still in darkness. In an interesting scene at the burial, John explicitly states two men who aid in this process—Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. The former was a secret disciple because of his fear of the Jews; the latter had come to Jesus by night (John 3). It is intriguing that as the light of the day is waning, at the moment when the darkness seems to have won and it would be most dangerous to associate one's self with Jesus, these two men reveal themselves as followers of Jesus. They shine the light of their faith at the moment of greatest darkness.

Finally, John's gospel sheds more light than the others on the role of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, the Spirit is the one who must bring new birth. In John 7:37-39, he speaks of the Holy Spirit as the one through whom streams of living water will flow out of the heart. In chapters 14-16, Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as Helper (14:15-17, 25-26; 15:26) and the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father (15:26-27) who will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment and will guide believers in all truth as he glorifies Jesus (16:7-15). These passages are the most explicit mentions of the person and role of the Holy Spirit in the gospels, thus making John the most Trinitarian gospel of the four.

These four themes are merely introductory to draw our attention to some themes as we begin reading the gospel. Other themes, such as individualism and glory, are key to the gospel's overall message.¹⁶ As we explore the gospel of John, take note of these and other themes that arise.

¹⁶For discussions on these two themes, as well as several others, I highly recommend Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015).

Recommended Resources

- *Abide in Me Discipleship Study Curriculum*
- *ESV Scripture Journal: John* (or a journal or notebook) to record insights while reading and studying together
- Books
 - ❖ Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015)
 - ❖ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990)
 - ❖ Tom Wright, *John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004)
 - ❖ Tom Wright, *John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004)

Prayer

- Pray for yourself and the other participants in this study that it will draw us close to the Triune God and to one another in community.
- You may want to pray following the A.C.T.S. model. A is for Adoration; C is for Confession; T is for Thanksgiving; and S is for Supplication.

Weekly Challenge

Commitment Statement: I understand that my involvement in this study is not only about me, but also about those who are in this study with me. Therefore, to love my neighbor well, I will commit to:

- Making attendance each week a priority.
- Coming to each meeting prepared by having read the assigned chapters.
- Participating by asking questions, talking in conversation time, sharing during discipleship question time, and sharing prayer requests.

Signature

Before Session 2 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 2.

Session 2: John 1-2

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read John 1:1-18 | |
| Day 2: Read John 1:19-28 | |
| Day 3: Read John 1:29-42 | |
| Day 4: Read John 1:43-51 | |
| Day 5: Read John 2:1-12 | |
| Day 6: Read John 2:13-25 | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

What is the significance of John beginning with the Word? What is the Word? What does this teach us about Jesus' identity?

How does John use light and darkness imagery in this passage?

Unlike Matthew's gospel where he prefers the fulfillment formula (This was to fulfill...), John prefers allusions to the Old Testament. The word in 1:14 is the word for tabernacle, meaning that Jesus "tabernacled" among them. What was the OT significance of the Tabernacle (see Exodus 26-31, 36-40)?

What things does John the Baptist say about Jesus? What do they mean? What are the OT foundations of these phrases?

What are Jesus' first words in the gospel? What is the significance of these words?

Jesus tells his mother, "My hour has not yet come" (2:4). What does this mean, and why does he perform the miracle anyway?

John says that this miracle was the first of the “signs” Jesus did, and this sign “manifested his glory” (2:11). John will record seven signs throughout the gospel (keep your eyes out for them as we continue) and each one points to Jesus’ glory. Glory is also a key theme of the gospel, so we will talk about it more as we continue. For now, what do you think it means?

In chapter 1 we saw that Jesus was the new Tabernacle. Now he says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (2:19). This statement is symbolic on a couple different levels: his death and his identity as the new temple. Talk about each of these, why they are significant, and what it teaches us about Jesus and his ministry.

John says that Jesus did not entrust himself to them because he knew what was in man (2:25). What kinds of things are in man that would cause this response by Jesus?

Application: How Do I Apply It?

If people looked closely at our lives, how would they answer Jesus’ question about what we are seeking (1:38)? How would I answer that question? What things in my life distract me from seeking Jesus?

How do we learn to live in light of God's presence among us?¹⁷

What do we learn from Jesus here about the call to discipleship?

What other applications can you think of related to the teaching of these chapters?

Weekly Challenge

Write down in a journal the things that distract you from following Jesus. Commit to pray each day this week that God would grant you focus and remove these distractions from your life.

Before Session 3 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 3.

¹⁷I recommend an excellent little book by Brother Lawrence called *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Compare John's allusions to presence here with Jesus' words in John 15 to "abide in him."

Session 3: John 3-4

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read John 3:1-15 | |
| Day 2: Read John 3:16-21 | |
| Day 3: Read John 3:22-36 | |
| Day 4: Read John 4:1-26 | |
| Day 5: Read John 4:27-45 | |
| Day 6: Read John 4:46-54 | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

What do you find most interesting about Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus? What does Jesus mean by being born again/from above (v. 3)?

John 3:16 is one of the most well-known verses in the Bible, but verses 17-21 are closely connected with it and often overlooked or unknown. What do verses 17-21 teach? How do these verses help explain verse 16? How is this teaching different than how we often speak to unbelievers?

What is the link between belief and obedience (see esp. v. 36)?

What do you find most interesting about Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well?

Bauckham suggests that the Gospel of John has a significant focus on *individualism*, marked by Jesus' frequent encounters with individuals in a one-on-one context.¹⁸ How does this one-on-one context affect how we respond to the text?

Jesus performs a second sign in healing the official's son. What does this miracle teach us about faith?

¹⁸Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 1-19.

Application: How Do I Apply It?

Which of these three characters (Nicodemus, Samaritan woman, official) do you most identify with and why? How do Jesus' answers in each encounter challenge and/or strengthen your faith?

In what ways does Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus look different than our typical "evangelistic" conversation? How might this help us understand a call to discipleship instead of merely a call to "making a decision"?

What other applications can you think of related to the teaching of these chapters?

Weekly Challenge

In your journal, write down one-on-one interactions that you have throughout the week. Commit to pray for those individuals.

Before Session 4 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 4.

Session 4: John 5-6

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read John 5:1-17 | |
| Day 2: Read John 5:18-29 | |
| Day 3: Read John 5:30-47 | |
| Day 4: Read John 6:1-21 | |
| Day 5: Read John 6:22-59 | |
| Day 6: Read John 6:60-71 | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

Jesus' encounter with this invalid is the fourth personal encounter Jesus has with someone, apparently in a one-on-one context. Jesus, as he often does, asks a question. What do you make of the invalid's response? How does Jesus' subsequent discussion with this man take the issue beyond physical health to his spiritual health?

What does Jesus mean by saying "My Father is working until now, and I am working?" (v. 17). The Jews are angry with Jesus, interpreting this statement as a claim to be equal with God. Jesus goes on in vv. 19-29 to clarify, but does not deny that he is equal to the Father. How can we explain how Jesus is distinct from the Father yet equal with the Father?

Although Protestant doctrine emphasizes justification by faith and not by works, works are important. What does Jesus say about works in v. 29? What role do "works" play in discipleship?

Jesus says in v. 34 that he says these things so that they may be saved. What is the relationship between what Jesus has said and salvation?

What do verses 39 and 46-47 teach us about how to read the Old Testament?

In 6:25, the people wonder how Jesus came to be where he was when he hadn't left in the boat with his disciples. Jesus does not give them a direct answer, however, but instead a cryptic statement and a metaphor. What is he saying? Why might Jesus take this approach? What might John be trying to highlight by including this exchange?

John records seven I AM statements of Jesus,¹⁹ plus several times where Jesus directly calls himself "I AM."²⁰ Discuss the significance of Jesus calling Himself the Bread of Life in John 6.

What does Jesus mean when he says "the bread that I will give *for the life of the world* is my flesh" (v. 51)?

In v. 66, many disciples turn back and no longer follow him. What makes them leave at this point? Why is what Jesus says a "hard saying" (v. 60)?

¹⁹I AM the Bread of Life (6:35, 48, 51); I AM the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5); I AM the Door of the Sheep (10:7, 9); I AM the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14); I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25); I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6); I AM the Vine (15:1).

²⁰John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 18:5, 6, 8.

Application: How Do I Apply It?

Jesus speaks in metaphors and hard sayings that cause many followers to leave, but this seems counter-intuitive to the goal of making disciples. What can Jesus' words and actions in John 6 teach us about discipleship?

Peter's response in v. 68 is a paradigm for our own. How do we live in the confidence that Jesus alone has words of life?

What other applications can you think of related to the teaching of these chapters?

Weekly Challenge

What hard words could Jesus say that would be difficult for me to follow? Write these down in your journal and pray that he will help you hand those over to him and trust him.

Before Session 5 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 5.

Session 5: John 7-8

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read John 7:1-24 | |
| Day 2: Read John 7:25-39 | |
| Day 3: Read John 7:40-52 | |
| Day 4: Read John 7:53-8:30 | |
| Day 5: Read John 8:31-47 | |
| Day 6: Read John 8:48-59 | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?²¹

Already in 7:1 John says the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus. What seems to be the main motivation for their desire to kill Jesus?

Re-read John 5:30, 6:38-40, and 7:17. What do these passages teach us about the will of God? What is it? How is it known or discovered?

In John 7:37-39, Jesus returns to the living water metaphor he introduced in John 4. What similarities do you see between this passage and that discussion in John 4? What does John 7 add to extend our understanding of this metaphor?

Nicodemus reappears in the narrative in 7:45-52. How is he different than he was in chapter 3? What role does he play in this narrative?

²¹Note: The story of the woman caught in adultery in 7:53-8:11 is not original to John's gospel. It does help transition the side conversations of 7:40-52 into direct encounters between Jesus and the Pharisees in 8:12ff., thus it is easy to explain how this addition could have arisen. No major point of doctrine is lost by omitting this pericope, and likewise nothing problematic is encountered by reading and retaining it. In the story, Jesus tells the woman, like the invalid in chapter 5, to go and sin no more.

In 8:12, Jesus gives his second I AM statement—"I AM the Light of the World." Discuss the significance of Jesus calling Himself the Light of the World in John 8. Take into consideration also the light and darkness imagery that has been expounded in John's gospel.

The Pharisees ask the most important question they possibly can: Who are you (v. 25)? What is Jesus' answer? What does it mean? The Jews then ask in v. 53: Who do you make yourself out to be? What is Jesus' answer? What does it mean?

Read verses 31-32. They are packed with importance and raise important questions. What are some observations you have about these verses? How do we abide in Jesus' Word? If truth will set them free, to what are they enslaved? What is freedom?

Application: How Do I Apply It?

Despite many of the Jews desiring to kill Jesus, Jesus goes to teach in the temple anyway (v. 14). What does this say about Jesus' mission? What might this teach us about what it means to "follow Jesus"?

Notice verses 30-31. Many believed in Jesus, and in vv. 31ff he is speaking *to those who believed*. But in the following discourse, Jesus goes to great lengths to prove that those who have believed in him are actually children of the devil and not children of God. Why would he do this? What might this say about our focus on winning believers through "simple faith" or "easy believe-ism"?

What other applications can you think of related to the teaching of these chapters?

Weekly Challenge

Discerning God's Will: Think about some times in your life that you prayed to know God's will. How did God answer those prayers? What did you learn through that process? Write down your insights in your journal.

Before Session 6 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 6.

Session 6: John 9-11

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read John 9:1-41 | |
| Day 2: Read John 10:1-21 | |
| Day 3: Read John 10:22-42 | |
| Day 4: Read John 11:1-27 | |
| Day 5: Read John 11:28-44 | |
| Day 6: Read John 11:45-57 | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

After being healed, the Pharisees ask the man “What do you say about him [Jesus], since he has opened your eyes” (v. 17)? What does the man say? What do the Pharisees say? What would you say?

In 9:35-41, Jesus takes the man’s literal seeing and turns it into a metaphor for the Pharisees’ spiritual blindness. Whereas the man’s blindness was not because of his own sin, the Pharisees’ blindness is without excuse, especially since they claim to see. How does this metaphor help contrast the man with the Pharisees, and what lessons are we meant to learn?

In 10:1-18, Jesus gives his third and fourth I AM sayings: I AM the Door and I AM the Good Shepherd. How are these two related? What do these metaphors teach us about Jesus and His mission? Contrast what Jesus is and does with the thief mentioned in v. 10.

Jesus uses another light metaphor in 11:9-10. How does it relate to the previous light and darkness metaphors in John’s gospel?

Jesus’ fifth I AM saying, I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25), comes in his conversation with Martha. .” Discuss the significance of Jesus calling Himself the Resurrection and the Life in John 11.

Why is Jesus glad that he was not there when Lazarus died? Why does Jesus weep? How do we account for Jesus' actions, words, and emotions in this passage? What is John trying to convey?

Application: How Do I Apply It?

The story of the man born blind makes clear that his disability was not because of sin but in order that the words of God might be displayed in him (9:3). What can we learn from this story about living with trials, suffering, sickness, disability, or other ailments?

Jesus makes his most explicit claim of divinity in 10:30 (I and the Father are one), and the Jews again pick up stones to stone him. Jesus' response is to point to His works as evidence that He is who He says He is. Do our actions evidence who we say we are?

Caiaphas' words in 11:49-50 demonstrate a bizarre irony. He who will be instrumental in Jesus' death unknowingly prophesies how Jesus' death will save the nation. John adds that it would save not only the nation, but God's people from all nation. This passage sets forward one of the big theological questions of the Bible. How does God providentially guide human history through the free, and often sinful, choices of human beings?

What other applications can you think of related to the teaching of these chapters?

Weekly Challenge

When we look into a mirror, it gives us an accurate representation of our physical appearance, but it can't show us our heart. This means we can sometimes deceive ourselves about the state of our heart because we look alright on the outside. If we could look into a spiritual mirror, however, what would we see? At the end of each day this week, use Ignatius' Examen Prayer²² and consider how your actions of the day reflect or fail to reflect who you claim to be.

Before Session 7 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 7.

²²(1) Ask God for light; (2) Give thanks; (3) Review the day; (4) Face your shortcomings; (5) Look toward the day to come.

Session 7: John 12-13

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read John 12:1-19 | |
| Day 2: Read John 12:20-36a | |
| Day 3: Read John 12:36b-50 | |
| Day 4: Read John 13:1-20 | |
| Day 5: Read John 13:21-30 | |
| Day 6: Read John 13:31-38 | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

How does the plot to kill Lazarus speak to the attitudes the religious leaders had towards Jesus? What does their statement in 12:19 mean?

What is the correlation between the desire of some Greeks to see Jesus (12:20-22) and Jesus' statement that his hour has come to be glorified (12:23)? What might this suggest about Jesus' mission?

How does verse 25 help define what Jesus means by eternal life?

In what ways does Jesus' work on the cross cast out the ruler of this world (12:31)? Who are the "all people" that he will draw to himself? Is there a correlation between casting out the ruler of the world and drawing "all people" to himself?

What does Jesus mean by becoming "sons of light" in 12:36?

Jesus' words in 12:44-50 seem to draw together multiple themes from chapters 1-11. What are some of these themes and what has John taught us about them so far in the gospel?

What does it mean to "love one another: *just as I have loved you*, you also are to love one another" (13:34)? How does our love for one another show that we are Jesus' disciples?

Jesus is only a day away from his death, but John has a lot more to say than the other gospels about Jesus' words in the final day. At this point, however, how would we define Jesus' gospel message?

Application: How Do I Apply It?

Jesus says, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand" (13:7). How is this true in our lives today?

What might Jesus' example of washing the disciples feet (13:1-20) teach us about how to disciple others?

What other applications can you think of related to the teaching of these chapters?

Weekly Challenge

Write down a list of characteristics of people who you see love others well. Then, write down a list of characteristics of how Jesus loved his disciples. What similarities do you see? Choose one of these characteristics and pray that God will help you love others better in this respect.

Before Session 8 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 8.

Session 8: John 14-15

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read John 14:1-14 | |
| Day 2: Read John 14:15-31 | |
| Day 3: Read John 15:1-11 | |
| Day 4: Read John 15:12-17 | |
| Day 5: Read John 15:18-25 | |
| Day 6: Read John 15:26-16:4a | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

Jesus' statement in 14:6 is well-known: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." How does this relate to Jesus' exchange with Thomas? What is the significance of this statement as one of the "I AM" statements of Jesus in John's gospel?

How does Jesus define the relationship between Himself and the Father in 14:8-11?

What is the relationship between believing in Jesus and obeying him in this chapter?

Jesus begins to speak of the Holy Spirit in 14:16-17, and several more times in chapters 14-16. What do we learn about the person and work of the Holy Spirit here? (Continue asking this question in the coming chapters).

Application: How Do I Apply It?

John 14:13-14 is one of the reasons that Christians often end their prayers with the phrase "in Jesus' name." What other reasons do we pray in Jesus' name, or what does it mean in this context to pray in Jesus' name?

Jesus' next "I AM" statement is found in chapter 15:1—"I am the true vine." Jesus extends this analogy to answer important questions like "How do we abide in Christ?", "How do we glorify God?", and "How do we bear much fruit?" Discuss answers to these questions and how we can live them out in our lives.

Jesus' words in John 15:18-25 (esp. vv. 18-19) are an essential word for our modern culture. Too many Christians back down from the truth because of cultural pressure. How do Jesus' words in this section challenge us and encourage us to be bold?

What other applications can you think of related to the teaching of these chapters?

Weekly Challenge

Prayerfully consider John 15:18-25 and the discussion on this question from the study. What are some of the cultural pressures that you face that could cause you to back down from the truth? Write these in your journal and pray that God will grant you boldness.

Before Session 9 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 9.

Session 9: John 16-17

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read John 16:4b-15 | |
| Day 2: Read John 16:16-24 | |
| Day 3: Read John 16:25-33 | |
| Day 4: Read John 17:1-19 | |
| Day 5: Read John 17:20-26 | |
| Day 6: Re-read John 17:1-26 | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

Jesus says in John 16:20 that “your sorrow will turn into joy.” How does our sorrow turn into joy?

What does it mean that Jesus has overcome the world (16:33)? How does Jesus bring peace in the midst of tribulation?

After numerous mentions through the gospel, Jesus finally defines eternal life in 17:3. What does Jesus mean? How does this definition relate to key themes throughout the gospel? How does His definition look different than our common definitions of eternal life?

Who are the people the Father has given to the Son upon whom he bestows eternal life (17:2, 6)? The word gave/given occurs at least 17 times in chapter 17. What does Jesus mean by His use of the term in this chapter and what is its significance?

Jesus’ prayer in chapter 17 also highlights “oneness.” In what ways does Jesus speak of oneness and how should we interpret it?

What does Jesus' prayer in John 17 teach us about Jesus' mission, our salvation, and the gospel?

Application: How Do I Apply It?

Jesus says that it is to the disciples' advantage that he goes away. What is His reason? How have you experienced the Spirit's work in your life?

What do Jesus' words in John 17:15-18 teach us about discipleship? How does verse 20 relate to this notion of discipleship?

What other applications can you think of related to the teaching of these chapters?

Weekly Challenge

As you go throughout the week, write down in your journal some of the ways the Spirit is working in your life.

Before Session 10 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 10.

Session 10: John 18-19

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read John 18:1-11 | |
| Day 2: Read John 18:12-27 | |
| Day 3: Read John 18:28-40 | |
| Day 4: Read John 19:1-16a | |
| Day 5: Read John 19:16b-30 | |
| Day 6: Read John 19:31-42 | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

Jesus returns to the theme of that which is *given*, so prominent in chapter 17—“shall I not drink the cup that the Father has *given* me?” (18:11). How does Jesus’ use of this word strengthen the message of what He came to do? How does the “cup” serve as an appropriate metaphor for His suffering and death?

In his interaction with Pilate, Jesus says “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from this world” (John 18:36). What does this teach us about the nature of Jesus’ kingdom?

What does Jesus say His purpose was for coming into the world (18:37)? What is the significance of this statement and what might it add to our understanding of the gospel as Jesus preached it?

Pilate three times calls Jesus “king” (vv. 14, 15, 19), but the Jewish people ironically say they have no king but Caesar. Pilate also says three times that he found no guilt in Jesus (18:38; 19: 4, 6). How can we wrap our minds around Pilate’s insight yet decision to follow through on killing Jesus, as well as the blatant rejection of Jesus by His own people, the Jews?

John's portrayal of the crucifixion is consistent with, yet contains a different focus than, the other gospels. What do you notice that John highlights? Why?

John includes three sayings of Jesus from the cross. What do we make of Jesus' words to His mother and to John? Why might John include Jesus' words, "I thirst"? What does Jesus mean by saying "It is finished"?

Application: How Do I Apply It?

Pilate acts in fear out of ignorance (19:8), but the Jewish leaders have no excuse. Jesus says that they have the "greater sin" (v. 11). What might these verses teach us about the various ways that people fail to follow and have faith in Jesus? What does Jesus mean by the "greater sin"?

Why does Jesus' burial get a longer look in John's gospel than the others? What is its significance? What does the burial account teach us about discipleship?

What other applications can you think of related to the teaching of these chapters?

Weekly Challenge

Prayerfully examine your life and consider areas where you are living for a worldly kingdom rather than a heavenly kingdom. Pray that God will reorient your priorities the way Jesus taught us: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33).

Before Session 11 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 11.

Session 11: John 20-21

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read John 20:1-10 | |
| Day 2: Read John 20:11-18 | |
| Day 3: Read John 20:19-31 | |
| Day 4: Read John 21:1-14 | |
| Day 5: Read John 21:15-19 | |
| Day 6: Read John 21:20-25 | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

Why does John twice call the resurrection day “the first day of the week” (20:1, 19)?

What are some of the small details that John includes in his resurrection account? Why might he include these small details?

What is significant about Jesus’ question in 20:15—“What are you seeking?” What is significant about Mary recognizing Jesus only after He calls her by name (v. 16)?

In 20:24-29 the theme of seeing, which is important in John’s gospel, reappears. What is its significance here?

John gives his purpose statement in 20:30-31. In what ways has his gospel given evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?

Application: How Do I Apply It?

John's purpose statement also gives rise to several key questions we have been exploring in John's gospel. Who is Jesus? What is the purpose of life? What is eternal life? How would you answer these questions at this point?

Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves Him, reminding Peter of his three-fold denial. If Jesus spoke to us in this context, what might He say that would grieve us regarding how we have sinned against Him? But then, what promise is Jesus waiting to speak over us?

What do Jesus' instructions to Peter teach us about discipleship?

How does John's ending affect us as readers? What might he be encouraging us to do?

What other applications can you think of related to the teaching of these chapters?

Weekly Challenge

After his resurrection, Jesus continues to serve his disciples, here feeding them breakfast. One of the key ways Jesus disciplined others was by eating with them. Invite an individual or family over for dinner in order to serve them. As you plan to physically and literally feed them, prayerfully consider how you might spiritually feed them by your kindness, hospitality, and service.

Before Session 12 next week, please complete the reading and observation questions at the beginning of Session 12.

Session 12: Conclusion & Next Steps

Each week we recommend a 6-day reading program that will prepare you for the Discipleship Study on Day 7.

Observation: What Do I See?

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Day 1: Read 1 John 1 | |
| Day 2: Read 1 John 2 | |
| Day 3: Read 1 John 3 | |
| Day 4: Read 1 John 4 | |
| Day 5: Read 1 John 5 | |
| Day 6: Read 2-3 John | |

Interpretation: What Does it Mean?

What parallels do you see between the messages of 1-3 John and the gospel of John? What is the purpose of each book? How do 1-3 John help highlight and reinforce messages from the gospel of John?

| | |
|--------------|--|
| 1 John//John | |
| 2 John//John | |
| 3 John//John | |

Application: How Do I Apply It?

What do 1-3 John teach us about the gospel?

What do 1-3 John teach us about discipleship?

How has this study impacted and helped you articulate the gospel?

How has this study impacted your understanding and practice of discipleship?

What is your next step of obedience?

Weekly Challenge

Make a decision on your next step. Write it down and share that commitment with someone else who will keep you accountable to take that step.

Possible Next Steps

- ☐ Repent and follow Jesus
- ☐ Be baptized
- ☐ Disciple someone else
- ☐ Lead your own small group, whether prayer or Bible study
- ☐ Get involved in a local church

My next step is: _____

Congratulations on completing the 12-session Abide in Me Discipleship Study based on the Gospel of John. I trust that your time in God's Word and in this group has changed you. I pray that you better understand who Jesus is, what the gospel and discipleship are, and you are committed to becoming a disciple-maker. May the Father grant you peace and eternal life in Christ and fellowship with Him through the Holy Spirit as you continue on this journey of faith and discipleship.

In Christ,

Kyle Rapinchuk