

GOD ON MISSION

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN A STUDY GUIDE

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Introduction

The man and the gospel he wrote

There are no more controversial books in the bible than the 4 gospels; and the most controversial is the Gospel According to John, the subject of this study. It is radically different in its approach and its content of the life of Jesus than the others gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (commonly called the 'synoptic' gospel, which literally means 'seeing with the same eyes'). John contains the most unique material and the most theologically dense material of the four gospels. It is also an intensely personal gospel, as we get a glimpse of Jesus the God-man much more intimately than the other three gospels.

Like the other gospels, John was written anonymously and the attachment of John as the author comes from both internal and external evidence. Internal evidence for John's authorship is seen by: 1) personal witness of the events (John 19:35); 2) intimate knowledge of Jesus' interactions with the disciples (John 6:5-7; 12:2-1; 13:3-6; 14:5,8,22); 3) insight into Jesus' thoughts (John 6:6,61,64; 18:4); 4) the author being a Palestinian Jew who had first-hand knowledge of Jerusalem and the surrounding country as described throughout the book; and 5) the closing of the gospel telling of the interaction of Jesus with "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20). These internal evidences can point only to the inner circle of Jesus, namely, Peter, James, or John. Peter is ruled out because he is referred to constantly in the third person. James is ruled out because he was martyred prior to AD44 (Acts 12:2) which was well before the book was written (typically dated at AD85). So by process of elimination, we end up with John (known as "the evangelist"). External evidence also points to John's authorship, as the earliest traditions of the church claimed John as the scribe. Irenaeus bishop of Lyons (c. 180), Theophilus of Antioch (c. 165), Clement of Alexandria (c. 220), and the 4th Century historian Eusebius all credited John as the author.

We are first introduced to John in Mark 1:19 as Jesus is calling his first disciples. His father was Zebedee, and his brother James was also one of the first disciples. John is typically viewed as a young, gentle, maybe even effeminate man famously known for being the disciple that Jesus loved and leaning on Jesus, as mentioned in John 21:20. When in actuality, John and his brother James were a couple of testosterone-filled hotheads nicknamed the "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17) who wanted to call fire down on a town that wouldn't listen to Jesus (Luke 9:51-56)! It would seem that John and his brother came by their personalities honestly, as it was their mother who asked Jesus if her sons could alongside Jesus (Matthew 20:20-28), and John and his brother were all for the idea.

But we get the best picture of John as we read his writings. John penned a total of 5 books of the Bible: The Gospel According to John; 1, 2, and 3 John; and the book of Revelation. All of these books were written toward the end of John's life. As mentioned earlier, his Gospel is generally believed to have been written around AD85, with his other writings following over the next decade (Revelation is believed to have been written no later than AD96 while John was

imprisoned on the island of Patmos). In John's writings, we still see his zeal and passion that his nickname "Son of Thunder" would imply, but this passion has been redirected away from calling judgment down from heaven and ruling alongside Jesus to an intense love for Jesus and the people of Jesus' Church. We will see in John's Gospel that he is a deep theologian, but that his theology is fueled by a deep love for his Savior and Lord. This is a great example to us, as Paul encourages us in 1 Corinthians 13 to let love be the motivator for everything we do, lest all our words, knowledge, and theology be a noisy, clanging cymbal.

The Gospel of John can be broken down into 4 simple parts: 1) The Prologue (1:1-18); 2) Jesus' Ministry (1:19-11:57); 3) The Passion Week (12:1-20:29); and 4) The Epilogue (20:30-21:25). Additionally, we see John making a pretty big deal about the number "7". The number 7 is traditionally viewed as a number of completeness or perfection. In the Gospel of John, there are 2 main sets of "7" to pay attention to: Jesus' 7 Miracles (2:1-12; 4:43-54; 5:1-47; 6:1-15; 6:16-21; 9:1-41; and 11:1-57) and Jesus' 7 "I Am" Statements (6:35,51; 8:12; 10:7,9; 10:11,14; 11:25; 14:6; and 15:1). Keeping these general breakdowns of John's Gospel in mind will help your reading and studying of The Gospel of John.

John's purpose in writing this Gospel is made very clear in John 20:31 *"but 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's desire was to see people come to faith in Jesus, and that those who are saved will live a full life as God intended (cf. John 10:10). It is imperative to understand that being a Christ-follower is much more than some decision or understanding of biblical principles, but that being a Christ-follower is about a joy-filled life we live that is saturated with the worship of Jesus and service to others.

How to use this study guide

This study guide is designed to be a complementary learning tool that will correspond to the sermon series "God on Mission: The Gospel of John". You may choose to use this study guide for your personal devotion time or as part of your study and discussion for your community group experience, or both! Since it is designed to complement the sermon series, it is highly encouraged that you listen to the sermons, take notes, and incorporate them into this study. If you miss any sermons on a Sunday morning, you will be able to download the audio from the Delta Church website (www.deltachurch.net). Each study in this guide will be broken down as follows:

- An overview of the passage, giving you a broad brushstroke of what's being communicated
- The key text (verse) of the particular passage that is encouraged to be memorized that week
- The primary theological emphasis of the passage; basically, what the passage is teaching us about God

- 3-4 questions to think about and interact with
- A key missional emphasis on how to live, serve, and share the Gospel with others
- A prayer emphasis that will encourage your adoration, confession, or supplication to Jesus...and remember, prayer is about talking *and listening* to God!

It is my prayer that this study guide will be a blessing to you both personally and corporately. I look forward to diving headfirst into The Gospel of John with you to take a good long look at the life of Jesus and discover how we can deepen our belief and love for our great Savior & Leader. If at any time you have a question or a thought, please don't hesitate to contact me so we can learn together!

Grace+Peace to you on your journey,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ryan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping tail.

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