

# Encountering the Word

6 Studies. John 6 - 8



## Welcome to John – Encountering the Word

If you're using these studies in a **Bible Study Group**, try to make sure you've read the passage and done your preparation before you meet. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but also to the other members of your group.

If you're a **Bible Study Group Leader** please don't feel that your group needs to answer every question in every study, especially as some of these studies have lots of questions. There are different types of questions, including some which reflect on the same points from slightly different perspectives. Please choose the questions most appropriate for your group.

If you're doing these studies **individually**, why not let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even as you go) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

### Recommended Reading:

*John* - Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Colin Kruse

*John, the Shepherd King* - RTBT. Paul Barnett

*The Message of John* - The Bible Speaks Today. Bruce Milne

### Recommended Watching

*John*. The Bible Project (8:45) [www.thebibleproject.com/videos/john-1-12](http://www.thebibleproject.com/videos/john-1-12)

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1. What is the most memorable meal you've ever eaten? What was it that made it so memorable?
2. Think of a time when you've been very afraid. What were you most fearful of?

**Read John 6:1 - 15**

3. Why does John call the miraculous healings "signs" in verse 2?
4. John tells us the reason why the crowds were following Jesus. What are your reflections on their motivations?"
5. How can we be most helpful to people who are interested in Jesus for similar reasons?
6. With such motivations driving the crowds, why does Jesus still respond by performing another miraculous sign?

- 7.** A miraculous sign involving the multiplication of food may not seem as spectacular as a healing or one of Jesus' other signs. Why do you think John includes this episode in his account of Jesus' life?
  
- 8.** What is the significance of the imminence of the Passover?
  
- 9.** If this section was titled "God Feeds Israel" instead of "Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand" as in the NIV, how would your understanding of the passage change?
  
- 10.** What are the similarities with other occasions when God has provided for his people's needs?  
*See Exodus 16, 1 Kings 17, etc.*
  
- 11.** What are the differences between this episode and those other examples of God's provision?

**12.** What do you think might be Jesus' purpose in testing Philip (v 5 - 6)?

**13.** What significance do you see in the leftover food?

**14.** In what way is the feeding of the five thousand people a "sign" (v 14) in the same way that the previous miraculous healings are "signs"?

*See John 20:30 - 31*

**15.** Why do you think Jesus so deliberately thwarts the people's efforts to "make him king by force"? (v 15).

### **Read John 6:16 - 24**

**16.** It is no accident that John records this sea-crossing story in the context of the celebration of the Passover. What does he want his readers to understand from the parallel with that experience in their history?

- 17.** Imagine you were reading these 2 accounts with a non-Christian friend. What aspects of the story do you think would attract their attention the most?  
Why?
  
- 18.** What else about Jesus is attractive to people today, such that crowds still pursue him in various ways?
  
- 19.** What aspects of Jesus' ministry or character as revealed here cut across people's expectations today of who he is?
  
- 20.** How do these two episodes shape our understanding of Jesus' mission and purpose?

1. Rate yourself on a credulity scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is completely gullible and 10 is totally sceptical.  
Can you think of an example that illustrates your rating?
  
2. Which of Jesus' claims about himself in the Bible do you find:
  - the most reassuring?
  
  - the most challenging?

**Read John 6:25 - 40**

3. How has "God the Father has placed his seal of approval" on Jesus (v 27)?
  
4. How is bread a useful metaphor for eternal life?
  
5. Why is it often easier to work for "food that spoils" than for "food that endures to eternal life" (v 27)?
  
6. What does Jesus mean when he says, "I am the bread of life?"

- 7.** How is Jesus' identity as the "bread of life" demonstrated by his feeding of the 5000?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 8.** How is this "bread of life" different to the manna that God had provided for his people in the wilderness?  
How is it similar?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 9.** If people you know were to echo the words of the crowd in 6:34, "give us this bread," what would you tell them they need to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 10.** In what ways do both the manna and the OT Law point beyond themselves?  
*See for example Deuteronomy 8:1 - 5*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 11.** Do you notice any development in the people's understanding throughout this episode?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 12.** How can Jesus and the father both be equally God if verse 38 is true?





1. What do you feel is the hardest thing about following Jesus?
2. What reasons have you heard people give for their decision not to follow or obey Jesus?

**Read John 6:41 - 71**

3. If you had to choose a key verse that summed up or represented this section, which verse would you choose?
4. What have the Jewish opponents of Jesus not understood about God?
5. What does this section add to our understanding of Jesus' identity as "the bread of life?"
6. How is the comparison between "the bread of life" and the manna during the wilderness wanderings continued and developed in these verses?

- 7.** In verses 44 & 45 Jesus draws on the words of Jeremiah (31:34) and Isaiah (54:13). What does he use these two Old Testament quotations to teach about himself?

*In the Old Testament, the separation of blood from flesh was the ultimate picture of a violent and humiliating death (ie Isaiah 49:25 - 26). In John 6:35 Jesus has already spoken of what it means to eat of him and drink from him.*

- 8.** Within this context, what does Jesus mean when he speaks of the necessity to “eat my flesh and drink my blood” (v 54)?
- 9.** Write verses 53 & 54 in your own words, without any Christian jargon.
- 10.** Do you feel that there is a particular aspect of Jesus’ teaching here that is “a hard teaching” (v 60)?
- 11.** Do followers of Jesus who abandon him (in his day and ours) do so because they haven’t understood what he taught, or because they have understood, and they don’t like it?

- 12.** What impact does the truth of Peter’s words in verse 68 have on you today?
- 13.** Why does Jesus respond to Peter the way he does: “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve” (v 70)?
- 14.** How does this passage encourage you to pray for Christian brothers and sisters who might be at risk of turning away from Jesus?

*Over the years some Christians have understood this eating and drinking of Christ to be a reference to the Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion. However, there are a number of reasons – contextual, grammatical, and textual – why that is unlikely to have been Jesus’ or John’s intention.*

- 15.** What reasons can you think of why this passage is probably not referring to the Lord’s Supper?
- 16.** A friend says to you, “I believe in Jesus, but I don’t believe he died for me, or for anyone else for that matter.”  
How does this section of John 6 help you frame a gracious response?

1. Who is the most famous person you've ever seen?  
Spoken to? Facebook friended?
  
2. Do you ever find yourself wishing that Jesus' earthly ministry was somehow different?  
If you could change it, what would you have done differently?
  
3. Someone stops you in the street with a camera and a microphone and asks you, "Who is Jesus?" What do you say?

**Read John 7:1 - 13**

4. Reflect back on what we've seen and heard in John's gospel so far. Why are the Jews (most likely the Jewish religious authorities) waiting to take Jesus' life?
  
5. Jesus' brothers (v 3) are most likely other sons of Mary and Joseph, younger than Jesus. Why do you think they urge Jesus to go and perform miracles in Judea?

- 6.** What is your reaction to the fact that Jesus' own brothers don't believe in him (v 5)?
  
- 7.** How can the disbelief of Jesus' brothers be an encouragement in our evangelistic efforts today?
  
- 8.** What does Jesus mean when he speaks about "the right time" (v 8)?
  
- 9.** How can the positive assessment of Jesus in verse 12 "he is a good man" actually become an unhelpful opinion to hold?
  
- 10.** What are some of the different ways in which Jesus testifies that the world is evil (v 7)?
  
- 11.** How does Jesus' testimony against the world relate to God's love for the world as described in John 3:16?

- 12.** How is opposition to Jesus and his message evident today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 13.** How should we think about and respond to the opposition we face as followers of Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 14.** Millions of Christians around the world face the same situation as described in verse 13, afraid to speak of Jesus because of the risk of violence from the authorities. How can you support these Christian brothers and sisters?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 15.** How does John's eye-witness testimony encourage us to pray specifically for our friends and family who don't know Jesus as Saviour and Lord?

1. Have you ever tried to cover up the truth about some event, or action, or person?  
What was your motivation? Pride? Practical joke?  
Laziness?
  
2. Has there ever been a time when someone made assumptions about you, your actions or motivations?  
How did you feel?  
How did you respond?
  
3. What are some of the tools and techniques John has used so far in his gospel to teach his readers about Jesus?

**Read John 7:14 - 52**

4. What different ideas about Jesus' identity are expressed in this passage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What does Jesus say about his teaching and his mission?



- 6.** In what ways does Jesus' explanation about his ministry put the way we sometimes live at odds with his intentions?
  
- 7.** How do Jesus' words and ministry "honour the one who sent him"?
  
- 8.** In what way are "the Jews" (the Jewish religious leaders) breaking the Law?
  
- 9.** What do we learn about how the people expect God to act?
  
- 10.** In what ways do religious people today expect God to act?
  
- 11.** Are there ways in which you also imagine that you can keep Jesus under your own control?

- 12.** What is the significance of Jesus' words to the guards (and through them to the Pharisees) in verses 33 & 34?

*The pouring of water was an important feature of the daily celebrations during the Feast of Tabernacles.*

*See also Ezekiel 47:1 - 12.*

- 13.** What do you think Jesus' original hearers thought when they heard him promising "streams of living water"?
- 14.** In what ways is the water imagery a good illustration for the work of the Holy Spirit?
- 15.** Why doesn't Jesus just give the Holy Spirit now, instead of only promising to send him?
- 16.** According to John's explanation in 38 - 39, what is the problem with the message some people promote that a Christian needs to do certain things in order to receive the Spirit?

- 17.** How do these events demonstrate God's sovereign control over all the events of Jesus' life?
- 18.** Imagine you were reading the story of Jesus in John's gospel for the first time. What conclusions would you have reached by the time you got to the end of chapter 7?
- What questions would you have?
  
  - How would you understand the work of the Holy Spirit?
- 19.** Why do you think that there still exists so many conflicting ideas about Jesus' identity?

1. When have you ever been in absolute darkness?  
What did you feel and experience?  
How did you become more reliant on other senses while in the darkness?
  
2. If a friend described someone as “living in darkness” what kind of situation would you imagine that person to be in?
  
3. What are some of the different ways we use the word “judge” today?  
From what you know of Jesus how many of these different meanings have parallels in his ministry?

**Read John 8:12 - 30**

4. In what ways has the metaphor of “light” already been used in John’s gospel?  
*See for example John 1:1 - 9 and John 3:1-2 & 19 - 21*
  
5. What does Jesus mean when he says, “I am the light of the world” (v 12)?

- 6.** How is Jesus understanding of darkness different to that which you discussed in the introduction?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 7.** In what ways does God the Father bear witness to Jesus (v 18)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 8.** What does Jesus say are the differences between him and the Pharisees?  
How do you see these in the ministry of Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 9.** How the differences between Jesus and his hearers demonstrated?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 10.** Why do you think John records so many instances of people struggling to come to terms with Jesus' identity?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 11.** Compare Jesus' words in verses 15 & 26. How do you reconcile these two statements?

**12.** Consider Jesus' statement in verse 26.

- What do you think would have been the reaction of the Pharisees?
  
- How would your non-Christian friends respond to this claim?
  
- How could you help your friends see the truth and importance of this claim?

**13.** What "light" does Jesus offer people today?

**14.** Why do many of our friends refuse to take up Jesus' offer of light?

*Refer again to John 3:20*

**15.** What does this episode tell us about the ministry of Jesus that was still to come?

**16.** How does Jesus say the ministry that follows will reveal the truth about his identity?

**17.** Reflecting on this exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees, why is it so important to come to a right conclusion regarding Jesus' identity?

**Read John 8:31 - 59**

**18.** What is "the truth" that sets people free, and from what does it set people free?

**19.** How does committing a sin make a person a slave to sin?

**20.** What is the evidence that Jesus' opponents are children of "the devil" (v 44)?

**21.** What kinds of things might we be tempted to point to in order to prove our spiritual pedigree?

**22.** Which of the claims that Jesus makes in this section do you think your non-Christian friends would have most difficulty accepting?











