

Encountering the Word

7 Studies. John 9 - 12



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

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1. What reasons do people offer as to why there is sickness and suffering in the world?
 2. If someone was described as being “spiritually blind” what do you think is being said?

Read John 9:1 - 12

3. What do we learn about the different worldviews of Jesus and his disciples from their interaction in verses 1 - 5?
 4. What do we learn about Jesus' nature and relationship with the Father through this section?
 5. How do you understand the relationship between sin and suffering?

- 6.** In what way are you sometimes guilty of judging others' imperfections and situation in life as being their own fault?

 - 7.** Can you recall a time when suffering or hardship has allowed you to understand God's mercy and power in a new or different way?

Read John 9:13 - 34

- 8.** Why do the Pharisees object initially to what Jesus has done?

 - 9.** Why does Jesus keep “breaking” the Sabbath (in the eyes of the Pharisees - see for example Matthew 12) when he knows what the religious leaders’ response will be?

The Pharisees considered mixing saliva and dirt to be kneading and putting the resulting mixture on a blind man's eyes was considered a work of healing. Both these actions they regarded as prohibited on the Sabbath

- 10.** The man's parents feared the leaders (v 22). In what ways are we sometimes tempted to fear other people rather than God?

- 11.** Think about the most-challenging evangelistic conversation you've had. What made it so hard for you to explain your faith to that person?

 - 12.** Why do the Pharisees keep insisting that Jesus is a sinner?

 - 13.** What does the man see about Jesus that the Pharisees cannot?

Read John 9:35 - 41

- 14.** What do you think was the ultimate ‘work of God’ that Jesus wanted people to see?

 - 15.** How, through Jesus, are the blind made to see and those who see made blind (v 39)?

 - 16.** What does Jesus say in verse 41 about admitting our guilt and ignorance?

- 17.** What does Jesus want the formerly-blind man to do as a result of his newfound physical sight and spiritual sight?

 - 18.** What makes it hard for people today to see Jesus as he really is?

 - 19.** How does this episode help you pray specifically for people who don't know Jesus?

1. Have you ever had a pet that obeys your commands? What was the most useful task you could train it to perform?
What was the most humorous?
 2. What are some of the different pathways that people believe will lead them to God?
 3. What's the first characteristic that comes to mind when you hear of people portrayed allegorically as sheep?

Read John 10:1 - 21

- 4.** John records this teaching section immediately after the healing of the man born blind. How is Jesus' teaching in these verses related to the healing and the discussion in the previous chapter?
 - 5.** Make a list of everything Jesus says about:
 - False Shepherds
 - The good shepherd

- 6.** There are many other places in the Bible where the shepherd motif is used, particularly of God. Are you aware of any that add to our understanding of what Jesus is teaching here?

 - 7.** Who do you think Jesus means when he speaks of the “thief” and the “robber” (v 1)?

 - 8.** Who do you think Jesus was referring to in v8 as the “all who came before me”?

 - 9.** What does it mean for Jesus to be “the gate for the sheep” (v 7)?

 - 10.** Jesus goes on to identify himself not only as the gate, but also as the good shepherd (v 14). How would you explain these metaphors to someone who wasn’t a Christian?

 - 11.** What will it look like to have “life to the full” (v 10)?

- 12.** How could you explain this to encourage a Christian struggling with difficult circumstances?
- 13.** How will you choose to support and encourage those with the responsibility to care for Jesus' followers today?
- 14.** How are we as Christian people to distinguish between true and false shepherds?
- 15.** In verse 14 Jesus compares his relationship with his sheep, with his relationship with his Father. How does understanding something of this relationship between the persons of the Trinity help us follow Jesus the good shepherd?
- 16.** Who is Jesus speaking of when referring to the "sheep not of this pen" (v 16)?

- 17.** What do we learn about Jesus' journey to the cross through these interactions?

 - 18.** Which warning in this section do you find most challenging as you consider those who lead God's people?

 - 19.** Which aspect of the shepherd allegory do you find most comforting?

1. Have you ever been told you're like one of your parents?
What particular aspect of your character or behaviour causes people to make that comparison?
 2. Which one of Jesus' claims about himself have you wrestled with the most or most struggled to accept?
 3. What do people you know think of Jesus?
What has led them to form these opinions?

Read John 10:22 - 42

The Feast of Dedication (celebrated by Jewish people today as Hanukkah) celebrated the re-dedication of the Jerusalem temple in 165 BC after it was desecrated by the Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanes.

4. Why might this feast spur questions about Jesus' identity?
 5. What reasons does Jesus have for not making himself known as the long-awaited Messiah?

- 6.** In the Scriptures “eternal life” (v 28) is shorthand way of expressing significant theological truths. How would you explain the content of this wonderful offer Jesus makes?
 - 7.** In what way are Jesus’ miracles “from the Father” (v 32)?
 - 8.** What evidence does Jesus offer in verses 34 - 38 that his “claim to be God” (v 33) is true?
 - 9.** What greater understanding of our Trinitarian God do we gain in this section?
 - 10.** What do we learn about our faith and our eternal destinies?
 - 11.** So far in John, how do those people who refuse to believe in Jesus see and understand him?

- 12.** How do people today who don't acknowledge Jesus as God understand him?
- 13.** Why do you think John records Jesus' return to where he was baptised by John, and the interactions with people there?
- 14.** Think of the people with whom you spend your life. In what ways do they need to adjust or correct the way they look at Jesus?
- 15.** What would you want your non-Christian friends to believe "as of first importance" (1 Corinthians 15:3) about Jesus?
- 16.** How would you use this section to encourage a Christian person who is struggling in their faith?
- 17.** At the end of this section the leaders want to kill Jesus they knew that he was claiming to be God. Which of Jesus' claims do you think people react most strongly against today?

- 1.** What words would you like inscribed on your gravestone?

- 2.** If you could bring one person from history back from the dead, who would it be?

- 3.** What is it about death that makes it such a feared enemy?

Read John 11:1 – 16

- 4.** What reasons does Jesus give for the sign that he is going to perform?

- 5.** How does Jesus' statement about the person who "walks in the daytime" (v 9) give us assurance that he will complete the ministry his Father has given him?

- 6.** How is it better for the disciples that Jesus "was not there" (v 15)?

Read John 11:17 - 44

- 7.** How can Jesus speak of being “the resurrection and the life” (v 25) when he himself has not yet been raised from the dead?
 - 8.** Jesus’ statement about resurrection and life in verse 25 is response to Martha’s declaration about “the resurrection at the last day.” What does he want Martha (and by extension, us) to understand?
 - 9.** Compare the responses of Thomas, Mary and Martha to Jesus’ words and actions. What do we learn about each one and their understanding of who Jesus is?
 - 10.** The words of Jesus in verses 25 & 26 are often read at funerals. What do you think is the value of reading these promises at the funeral of someone who wasn’t a follower of Jesus?
 - 11.** Why does John record that Jesus wept at seeing Lazarus’ tomb and not when he heard that Lazarus had died?

- 12.** What does Jesus' prayer in verses 41 - 42 teach us about the work that he is doing in this episode?
- 13.** Why does John give such an extended account of this last sign (miracle) in his book about Jesus?
- 14.** In what ways is the raising of Lazarus similar to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead?
In what ways is it different?
- 15.** In what circumstances does trusting in Jesus mean our faith gets stretched?
- 16.** Do you think "God's Son may be glorified" (v 4) through times of sickness and suffering today?
- 17.** Having read this passage what would you say to someone who says, "Christians don't need to grieve when people they love die"?

- 1.** Have you ever been part of a welcoming committee? What did you have to do?

- 2.** Have you ever had very high hopes, the kind you can barely contain, only for them to evaporate before your eyes?
How does that make you feel now about the things for which you were so hopeful, or even about other things for which you also hold out hope?

Read John 11:45 – 57

- 3.** What reasons do you see for the two completely different responses to the sign Jesus performed in the earlier part of this chapter?

- 4.** What do you think the Jewish religious leaders have to fear from Jesus and the people who are believing in him?

- 5.** What are the leaders not seeing in the events of the previous chapter?

- 6.** How is Caiaphas' speech in verse 49 & 50 prophetic in a way that he does not understand?

 - 7.** What does John tell the reader with his editorial comment in verses 51 & 52?

 - 8.** How is this demonstration of the sovereignty of God an encouragement to you?

Read John 12:1 – 19

It was against Jewish custom for a woman to have her hair untied in the presence of a man not her husband. And the perfume was, as is pointed out, extremely valuable.

- 9.** Why do you think Jesus allowed Mary to anoint him in this way, even though it was so scandalous?

 - 10.** In verse 7 Jesus links this event with “the day of my burial.” If Jesus can so closely link this day with his burial, what does that tell us about how he understands his ministry at this point?

11. What will costly, extravagant worship look like for you this week?

Read Zechariah 9:9 – 13

12. What is being promised in this prophecy from the 6th Century BC?
13. How does the Zechariah prophecy help us understand what the people are saying in John 12?
14. Why is it significant that Jesus was recognised as the king of Israel in the line of David, as evidenced by the palm branches (symbols of Israel) and the quoting from Psalm 118?
15. In what ways are the crowds outside Jerusalem in a similar position to Caiaphas - speaking more truthfully than they know?

- 16.** How would you explain the significance of Jesus entering Jerusalem at the Passover feast?

See Exodus 12 for background to the Passover.

- 17.** How is Jesus different to the kind of king people were expecting?

- 18.** What are the distinguishing characteristics of his reign?

- 19.** Why is people putting their faith in Jesus, as in verse 11, so confronting to people who are opposed to Jesus?

- 20.** Mary's love for Jesus and desire to honour him outweighed her concern for social convention. Are there areas in your life or your church life where you feel the tension between honouring Jesus and abiding by convention?

1. When you were young, did the cycle of life and death, things growing and dying intrigue you? Frighten you? Go over your head?
 2. Do you tend to think of the message of Jesus as something for a select group of people or necessary for everyone?

Read John 12:20 – 36

- 3.** Why does Jesus respond to the request of the Greeks in the way he does in verse 23?

 - 4.** Can you recall how the term “hour” been used in John’s gospel prior to this point?
See 2:4, 7:30, 8:20.

 - 5.** Why is the term “glorified” (or “glorification,” etc) an appropriate term to describe Jesus’ crucifixion?

 - 6.** How does Jesus’ death glorify God the Father?

- 7.** In 11:4 Jesus said that his raising of Lazarus would bring glory to the Son of God. Is this the same kind of glorification as he has in mind here?
- 8.** What do you think Jesus means when he speaks of the necessity of hating life (v 25)?
- 9.** What would be the characteristics of someone who:
- Loves their life?
 - Hates their life for Christ's sake?
- 10.** Why does Jesus speak about the means by which he would die, when very few (if any!) of those listening would have understood what he meant?
See John 18:31 - 32
- 11.** What do we learn about the necessity and the results of Jesus' death and resurrection from his words here?

- 12.** How is “the prince of this world” (v 31) driven out by the death and resurrection of Jesus?
 - 13.** What does this victory mean for us when we’re confronted with the reality of sin and death?
 - 14.** What does it mean to “believe in the light” (v 36)?
 - 15.** Light and darkness are major themes repeated throughout John’s gospel. Why do you think John draws on this imagery so deeply?
 - 16.** Which aspects of your life do you find it too easy to keep loving at the expense of hating your life for Jesus’ sake?
 - 17.** A friend asks, “What has God ever done for me?” Having read this passage, how do you respond?

1. Can you recall a time when you were swayed by the opinion of the majority against your better judgment? What was the outcome?
 2. In many countries it's illegal for Christians to gather publicly. Do you think believers there should meet in public and face the consequences, or keep their faith private?

Read John 12:37 - 50

- 3.** Knowing John's purpose in recording the signs that Jesus performed (see John 20:30 - 31) what is John saying about the people he describes in verse 37?

 - 4.** Why is "the arm of the Lord" coupled with the message from God in the quotation from Isaiah 53?
In Isaiah you'll find "the LORD" indicating God's personal name.

 - 5.** How do the two quotes from Isaiah shed light on Jesus' ministry so far in John's gospel?

- 6.** How would you respond to one of these Jewish religious leaders who might say “Isaiah proves that it’s God’s fault I didn’t believe in Jesus”?
 - 7.** How can John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, say that Isaiah “saw Jesus’ glory” (v 41)?
 - 8.** How does John’s statement about Isaiah seeing Jesus’ glory shape our understanding of Old Testament prophecy more broadly?
 - 9.** How is it that Jesus can say that to believe in him is to believe in the Father, “who sent me” (v 44)?
 - 10.** What have you learned about God the Father through hearing Jesus’ words in John’s gospel?
 - 11.** If you heard someone making the claims that Jesus makes in verses 44 - 46. what would you think?

- 12.** What kind of evidence would it take for you to believe the sorts of claims Jesus makes here?

 - 13.** How has John been assembling this evidence throughout his gospel account?

 - 14.** In what ways does the love of praise from other people hinder us from receiving the praise of God?

 - 15.** And what does the praise of God sound like, anyway?!

 - 16.** When people we know steadfastly refuse to believe in Jesus, what encouragement is there in this passage for us?

 - 17.** How does John 12 spur us on in our evangelistic efforts?

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