

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World and Son of God

A 13-Session Middle School Bible Curriculum

Teacher Guides • Student Handouts • Slide Presentations

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TEACHER GUIDE

Session 1: The Word Became Flesh

John 1 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

Jesus is not just a good teacher — He is God Himself, who existed before time began and stepped into human history to make God known to us.

KEY VERSE

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”
— John 1:14 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- John the Baptist — the forerunner who prepared the way for Jesus
- Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael — the first disciples called by Jesus

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "If you could meet anyone in history, who would it be and why?" Transition: today we meet the most important person who ever lived — and He's not just from history, He's alive.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Walk through John 1:1-18 (the Word was God, the Word became flesh) then John 1:19-51 (John the Baptist's testimony and Jesus calling His first disciples). Emphasize that John opens his Gospel the way Genesis opens the Bible — "In the beginning" — on purpose.
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time to fill in the Think/Feel/Do section, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

John deliberately echoes Genesis 1:1 to show that Jesus, the Word, was present at creation and is God Himself. The rest of the Gospel will show this eternal God-Man living among ordinary people — which is the whole scandal and wonder of Christmas played out in narrative form.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think John calls Jesus "the Word" instead of just using His name?
- John the Baptist had followers of his own, but he pointed them to Jesus instead of keeping them. What does that teach us about humility?
- Nathanael went from skeptical ("Can anything good come out of Nazareth?") to calling Jesus the Son of God in the same conversation. What changed his mind?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

First-century Judea was under Roman occupation, and the Jewish people were longing for a promised Messiah. John the Baptist's ministry — preaching repentance and baptizing in the Jordan River — fit a recognizable pattern: prophets like Elijah had also worked near the Jordan, and ritual washing (mikveh) was already part of Jewish purification practice, so a "baptism of repentance" would have made immediate sense to his audience.

Calling a group of first disciples wasn't unusual in itself — rabbis commonly gathered students (talmidim) who would follow them to learn their teaching and imitate their lives. What was unusual is that Jesus called ordinary fishermen rather than the disciples choosing Him, and that His first followers immediately identify Him with messianic titles: "Rabbi," "Messiah," "Son of God," "King of Israel."

"Nazareth" carried a stigma — it was a small, unremarkable village in Galilee, far from the religious and political center of Jerusalem. Nathanael's question reflects a common assumption that nothing significant, let alone the Messiah, would come from such an obscure place.

MEMORY VERSE

John 1:14 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 1: The Word Became Flesh

John 1 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

— John 1:14 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- John the Baptist — the forerunner who prepared the way for Jesus
- Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael — the first disciples called by Jesus

BIG IDEA

Jesus is not just a good teacher — He is God Himself, who existed before time began and stepped into human history to make God known to us.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — John says Jesus is both fully God and fully human. Why does it matter that Jesus is both?

FEEL — How does it make you feel to know that God didn't stay distant, but came to live among people like you?

DO — This week, tell one person something true about who Jesus is — the way Andrew and Philip told others about Him in this chapter.

Memory Verse: John 1:14

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 2: New Birth, New Wine

John 2-3 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

Jesus reveals His glory through His first miracle at Cana, and teaches that entering God's kingdom requires being spiritually reborn — not just religious effort.

KEY VERSE

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."
— John 3:16 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- Mary — Jesus' mother, who prompts His first sign
- Nicodemus — a Pharisee and religious leader who comes to Jesus at night

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "What's the most awkward thing that could go wrong at a wedding?" Running out of food or drink in the ancient world was a genuine social disaster — that's exactly the problem Jesus solves.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11), Jesus cleansing the temple (2:13-22), and His night conversation with Nicodemus about being "born again" (3:1-21).
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read John 3:16 together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The first sign shows Jesus quietly transforming the ordinary (water) into the extraordinary (the best wine) — a preview of what He does with a life. His talk with Nicodemus makes explicit what the whole Gospel is about: God sent His Son not to condemn the world, but so that anyone who believes can be reborn into everlasting life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think John calls the miracle at Cana a "sign" rather than just a miracle? What was it pointing to?
- Nicodemus was a respected religious leader, yet Jesus told him he needed to be "born again." Why would religious knowledge alone not be enough?
- What does it mean that God gave His Son because He loved "the world" — not just people who already had it figured out?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

A wedding in first-century Jewish culture could last up to a week, and the host family was responsible for providing food and wine for all the guests. Running out of wine would have brought lasting shame on the family — Jesus' miracle isn't a minor party trick, it rescues a family's honor.

The temple courts Jesus cleansed were the Court of the Gentiles — the one place non-Jews could come to pray. Merchants selling animals for sacrifice and money-changers (needed because Roman coins bore images and couldn't be used for temple offerings) had turned that court into a noisy marketplace, crowding out the very people it was meant to welcome.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling Jewish council — a position of real influence. That he came "by night" (3:2) likely reflects caution about being seen associating with Jesus, though John may also intend a symbolic contrast between darkness and the light Jesus offers.

MEMORY VERSE

John 3:16 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 2: New Birth, New Wine

John 2-3 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

— John 3:16 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- Mary — Jesus' mother, who prompts His first sign
- Nicodemus — a Pharisee and religious leader who comes to Jesus at night

BIG IDEA

Jesus reveals His glory through His first miracle at Cana, and teaches that entering God's kingdom requires being spiritually reborn — not just religious effort.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — Nicodemus had to admit he didn't understand everything about God, even though he was a religious expert. Why is that a hard thing to admit?

FEEL — How do you feel when you think about John 3:16 being written specifically for you, not just "the world" in general?

DO — Write down one area of your life you want God to make new this week, and ask Him to do it.

Memory Verse: John 3:16

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 3: Living Water for Everyone

John 4 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

Jesus offers eternal life to anyone who comes to Him — even people others have written off — and His power reaches across any distance.

KEY VERSE

"But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

— John 4:14 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- The Samaritan woman at the well — an outsider who becomes an evangelist to her town
- The Galilean official — a desperate father whose son Jesus heals from a distance

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "Has anyone ever assumed something about you that wasn't true?" Jesus crosses every social boundary to talk with someone most people avoided.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:1-42) and the healing of the official's son (4:43-54), the second sign in John.
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus offers "living water" — Himself — to a woman with a broken past and no social standing, showing that His grace isn't limited by race, gender, or reputation. The official's faith, tested by Jesus simply speaking a word from miles away, shows that Christ's authority isn't limited by distance either.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Jews and Samaritans normally avoided each other. Why was it surprising that Jesus spoke with this woman at all, let alone about deep spiritual things?
- The woman left her water jar and ran to tell her whole town about Jesus. What made her testimony convincing to them?
- The official believed Jesus' word before he had any proof his son was healed. What does that kind of faith look like in your own life?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

Jews and Samaritans had centuries of religious and ethnic tension between them — Samaritans were viewed as religiously compromised because of intermarriage and a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. Jewish travelers often went out of their way to avoid passing through Samaria altogether; John notes Jesus "needed" to go through it (4:4), which reads as intentional, not just geographic.

Women typically drew water in the cool of the morning or evening, often in groups. That this woman comes alone at noon, the hottest part of the day, suggests she was avoiding the other women — likely because of her marital history, which Jesus already knows before she tells him.

Capernaum, where the official's son lay sick, was roughly a day's journey from Cana. A royal or government official (likely in Herod Antipas's service) traveling that distance to beg a traveling rabbi for help shows the depth of his desperation — and makes his willingness to simply take Jesus at His word, without watching Him perform the healing, a striking act of faith.

MEMORY VERSE

John 4:14 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 3: Living Water for Everyone

John 4 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

“But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

— John 4:14 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- The Samaritan woman at the well — an outsider who becomes an evangelist to her town
- The Galilean official — a desperate father whose son Jesus heals from a distance

BIG IDEA

Jesus offers eternal life to anyone who comes to Him — even people others have written off — and His power reaches across any distance.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — The Samaritan woman thought her past disqualified her from a relationship with God. Do you ever feel that way?

FEEL — How does it feel to know Jesus already knows everything about you and still wants to talk with you?

DO — Like the woman, tell someone this week what Jesus has done for you.

Memory Verse: John 4:14

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 4: Authority Over Life and the Sabbath

John 5 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

Jesus heals on the Sabbath and claims equality with God the Father, showing that He has authority over sickness, judgment, and life itself.

KEY VERSE

"Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live."

— John 5:25 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- The man at the Pool of Bethesda — sick for 38 years before Jesus heals him
- The Jewish religious leaders — who oppose Jesus for healing on the Sabbath

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "What's the longest you've ever waited for something?" This man waited 38 years.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover the healing at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15) and Jesus' teaching on His equality with the Father and authority to give life and judge (5:16-47).
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

By healing on the Sabbath and calling God His own Father, Jesus makes an unmistakable claim to be equal with God — which is exactly why the religious leaders wanted Him dead (5:18). This third sign points forward to Jesus' ultimate authority: He can raise the dead, both physically and spiritually.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Jesus asked the sick man, "Do you want to be made well?" Why might that be a harder question to answer than it sounds?
- The religious leaders were more upset about the Sabbath rule being broken than about a man being healed after 38 years. What does that reveal about their priorities?
- Jesus says He only does what He sees the Father doing. What does that tell us about His relationship with God?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Pool of Bethesda, near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, has been confirmed archaeologically — a large public pool with five covered colonnades, matching John's description exactly. It was a well-known gathering place for the sick, likely because of a periodic bubbling of the water (possibly from an intermittent spring) that some believed had healing properties.

Sabbath law, rooted in the Ten Commandments' command to rest, had been expanded by religious tradition into detailed categories of forbidden "work" — carrying a mat was one of them. Jesus' command to the healed man to carry his mat wasn't incidental; it deliberately provoked a confrontation over how the Sabbath should be understood.

Calling God "My Father" in a way that claimed equality with Him, rather than the common address of God as Father over Israel generally, was heard by Jesus' opponents as blasphemy — a capital offense under Jewish law (5:18). This is the first of several moments in John where Jesus' words move His opponents from irritation to a desire to kill Him.

MEMORY VERSE

John 5:25 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 4: Authority Over Life and the Sabbath

John 5 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live."

— John 5:25 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- The man at the Pool of Bethesda — sick for 38 years before Jesus heals him
- The Jewish religious leaders — who oppose Jesus for healing on the Sabbath

BIG IDEA

Jesus heals on the Sabbath and claims equality with God the Father, showing that He has authority over sickness, judgment, and life itself.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — Jesus asked the sick man a question that seems obvious but wasn't: "Do you want to be made well?" What might keep someone from truly wanting change?

FEEL — How do you feel knowing Jesus has authority over every part of your life, even the parts that feel stuck?

DO — Identify one area where you've stopped hoping for change, and bring it to Jesus in prayer this week.

Memory Verse: John 5:25

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 5: Bread of Life

John 6 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

Jesus miraculously feeds thousands and walks on water to show His power over creation, then teaches that He alone can satisfy our deepest spiritual hunger.

KEY VERSE

"And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'"

— John 6:35 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- A boy with five loaves and two fish — whose small lunch feeds a crowd
- The Twelve disciples — including Peter, who affirms Jesus' words when others walk away

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "What's something small that turned out to be a lot more useful than you expected?" Today a boy's lunch feeds thousands.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1-15), Jesus walking on water (6:16-21), and His "Bread of Life" discourse (6:22-71), including the crowd's response and Peter's confession.
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus provides physical bread as a sign pointing to Himself as the true, eternal bread that satisfies the soul — recalling how God fed Israel with manna in the wilderness. The crowd wanted free food and a political king; Jesus offers something far greater, and many walk away when the cost of following Him becomes clear (6:66).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The boy only had five loaves and two fish, yet Jesus used it to feed thousands. What does this teach us about offering God what little we have?
- Why do you think many people stopped following Jesus after His "Bread of Life" teaching (6:66)?
- Peter answers Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (6:68). What does that tell us about real faith when a teaching is hard to understand?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

Passover was near (6:4), meaning the crowd following Jesus was likely swollen with pilgrims traveling toward Jerusalem — plausibly explaining a crowd in the thousands in a rural area near the Sea of Galilee. Feeding that many people from five small barley loaves (a poor man's bread) and two small fish would have been recognized immediately as an extraordinary, miraculous provision.

After the feeding, the crowd wanted to "make Him king by force" (6:15) — Galilee in this period was politically restless, and a miracle-working leader who could multiply bread was exactly the kind of figure some hoped would lead a revolt against Rome. Jesus withdraws alone specifically to avoid this misunderstanding of His mission.

Jesus' language of eating His flesh and drinking His blood (6:53-56) shocked His Jewish audience, for whom consuming blood was forbidden by Old Testament law (Leviticus 17:10-14). John's readers, writing after the Last Supper and early church practice of Communion, would have understood this language pointing forward to the meaning of that meal — Jesus giving His life for the world.

MEMORY VERSE

John 6:35 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 5: Bread of Life

John 6 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'"
— John 6:35 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- A boy with five loaves and two fish — whose small lunch feeds a crowd
- The Twelve disciples — including Peter, who affirms Jesus' words when others walk away

BIG IDEA

Jesus miraculously feeds thousands and walks on water to show His power over creation, then teaches that He alone can satisfy our deepest spiritual hunger.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — Some people followed Jesus just because He gave them free food, not because of who He was. What are ways people can follow Jesus today for the wrong reasons?

FEEL — How do you feel about Peter's answer — that even when things are hard to understand, there's nowhere else worth going?

DO — This week, bring God something that feels "too small to matter" (a worry, a task, a relationship) and ask Him to use it.

Memory Verse: John 6:35

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 6: Light of the World

John 7-8 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

During a major Jewish festival, Jesus publicly declares Himself the Light of the World and shows extraordinary mercy to a woman condemned by others.

KEY VERSE

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"

— John 8:12 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- The woman caught in adultery — shown mercy instead of condemnation
- The Pharisees — who repeatedly challenge Jesus' identity and authority

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "Have you ever been in total darkness — like a power outage or a cave? What was that like?" Jesus calls Himself the light that ends spiritual darkness.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover Jesus teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7), the account of the woman caught in adultery (8:1-11), and Jesus declaring "I am the light of the world" and confronting religious opposition (8:12-59).
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus offers the woman caught in adultery both truth and grace: He doesn't excuse her sin, but He doesn't condemn her either — "Go and sin no more" (8:11). As the Light of the World, He exposes sin honestly while offering a way out of darkness, which is the pattern of the gospel itself.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The religious leaders wanted to trap Jesus, but He responded by pointing back at their own sin ("He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone first"). What does His response teach us about judging others?
- Jesus told the woman "Neither do I condemn you" and also "go and sin no more." Why are both parts of that sentence important?
- What does it mean practically to "follow" the Light rather than just admire it from a distance?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) was one of three major Jewish pilgrimage festivals, commemorating Israel's wilderness wandering. Two of its rituals directly shape this section: a nightly lighting of massive golden lampstands in the temple courts (illuminating all Jerusalem) is the backdrop for "I am the light of the world," and a daily water-drawing ceremony from the Pool of Siloam likely stands behind Jesus' earlier invitation, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me" (7:37).

Under Jewish law (Deuteronomy 22:22-24), adultery was punishable by death for both parties — yet the religious leaders bring only the woman, not the man, exposing that their real goal was trapping Jesus rather than upholding justice. If Jesus said to stone her, He'd violate Roman law (which reserved capital punishment to Rome); if He said not to, He'd appear to reject Moses' law.

Many manuscript scholars note that John 7:53–8:11 is absent from the earliest Greek manuscripts of John, which is why some Bibles set it apart with a note. Most conservative scholars still regard it as reflecting a genuine historical episode about Jesus, even if its transmission history is unusual — it's worth being aware of this if students ask about footnotes in their Bibles.

MEMORY VERSE

John 8:12 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 6: Light of the World

John 7-8 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"

— John 8:12 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- The woman caught in adultery — shown mercy instead of condemnation
- The Pharisees — who repeatedly challenge Jesus' identity and authority

BIG IDEA

During a major Jewish festival, Jesus publicly declares Himself the Light of the World and shows extraordinary mercy to a woman condemned by others.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — Jesus didn't ignore the woman's sin, but He also didn't crush her with it. Why is that balance hard for people to get right?

FEEL — Is there anything in your life that feels like it belongs in the dark, hidden from others? How do you feel bringing it into the light?

DO — This week, extend the same grace-and-truth Jesus showed to someone you're tempted to judge harshly.

Memory Verse: John 8:12

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 7: The Good Shepherd Opens Blind Eyes

John 9-10 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

Jesus heals a man born blind and reveals Himself as the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep by name and lays down His life for them.

KEY VERSE

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."
— **John 10:11 (NKJV)**

KEY PEOPLE

- The man born blind — healed, interrogated, and ultimately worships Jesus
- The Pharisees — who reject the evidence of the miracle rather than reconsider their view of Jesus

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "Have you ever known something was true even when adults around you doubted you?" The healed man sticks to his testimony under intense pressure.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover the healing of the man born blind and the aftermath (John 9), then Jesus' "I am the good shepherd" teaching (10:1-21) and the confrontation at the Feast of Dedication (10:22-42).
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The healing of physical blindness becomes a picture of spiritual sight — the man who could not see ends up worshipping Jesus, while the Pharisees who could physically see remain spiritually blind (9:39-41). As the Good Shepherd, Jesus doesn't just teach truth from a distance; He knows His sheep individually and willingly lays down His life for them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The healed man's answer to the Pharisees' questions was simple: "One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see" (9:25). Why is a personal testimony like this hard to argue against?
- Jesus says a hired hand runs away when danger comes, but the Good Shepherd stays and gives His life. What's the difference between someone who's just doing a job and someone who truly cares?
- Jesus says His sheep "hear His voice" and follow Him (10:27). What does it look like practically to recognize and follow Jesus' voice today?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

A common belief in first-century Judaism connected suffering directly to personal or generational sin (hence the disciples' question, "who sinned, this man or his parents?" in 9:2). Jesus rejects that simple equation, saying instead that this happened "that the works of God should be revealed in him" — reframing suffering as an opportunity for God's glory rather than only a punishment.

Being "put out of the synagogue" (9:22, 34) was a serious social and religious penalty — it meant exclusion from Jewish communal worship and could mean isolation from family and community. That the man's own parents distance themselves out of fear of this penalty shows how much courage his testimony required.

Shepherding imagery would have been immediately familiar to Jesus' audience — Israel's kings and leaders were often criticized as bad shepherds who exploited the flock (see Ezekiel 34), and God Himself was described as Israel's true shepherd (Psalm 23). By calling Himself "the good shepherd," Jesus directly claims the role Ezekiel says only God could fulfill.

MEMORY VERSE

John 10:11 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 7: The Good Shepherd Opens Blind Eyes

John 9-10 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

— John 10:11 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- The man born blind — healed, interrogated, and ultimately worships Jesus
- The Pharisees — who reject the evidence of the miracle rather than reconsider their view of Jesus

BIG IDEA

Jesus heals a man born blind and reveals Himself as the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep by name and lays down His life for them.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — The Pharisees had all the religious training but missed who Jesus was. What's the difference between knowing facts about God and truly knowing Him?

FEEL — How does it feel to know Jesus calls His followers by name, like a shepherd who knows each sheep?

DO — Practice "listening for the Shepherd's voice" this week by reading a short passage of Scripture each day and asking God what He wants you to notice.

Memory Verse: John 10:11

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 8: I Am the Resurrection and the Life

John 11 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead — His greatest sign — proving He has power over death itself, even while He weeps with those who grieve.

KEY VERSE

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.'"

— John 11:25 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- Lazarus — raised from the dead after four days in the tomb
- Martha and Mary — sisters who each express grief and faith to Jesus

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "Have you ever waited for God to answer a prayer and felt like He was too slow?" Martha and Mary felt exactly that way.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Walk through the death of Lazarus, Jesus' delay, His conversations with Martha and Mary, His weeping at the tomb, and the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44), plus the religious leaders' reaction (11:45-57).
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

This seventh and greatest sign in John points directly to Jesus' own resurrection just a few chapters later. Jesus doesn't just perform a miracle from a distance — He enters into the sisters' grief, weeps with them (11:35), and then demonstrates that He is, in person, the resurrection and the life, not merely someone who can arrange for one.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Jesus waited two extra days before going to Lazarus, on purpose (11:6). Why do you think God sometimes allows pain before He brings healing or restoration?
- Jesus wept even though He knew He was about to raise Lazarus. What does that tell us about how Jesus feels toward our grief and suffering?
- Martha still believed Jesus could have prevented Lazarus's death, even while grieving. How can grief and faith exist together?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

Jewish burial customs of the time required burial within a day of death due to the climate, and mourning customs included professional mourners, loud weeping, and a multi-day period of visitation — explaining why "many of the Jews" had come to comfort Martha and Mary (11:19) and why Lazarus, dead four days, was firmly beyond any natural hope of revival by the time Jesus arrived.

Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem (11:18), making this miracle unusually public and impossible to hide — unlike some earlier signs performed more privately. This directly triggers the religious leaders' formal decision to have Jesus killed (11:47-53), since "if we let Him alone... the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

The high priest Caiaphas's statement that "it is expedient... that one man should die for the people" (11:50) is presented by John as unintentional prophecy — Caiaphas meant it as political pragmatism, but John shows it pointing to the true purpose of Jesus' coming death.

MEMORY VERSE

John 11:25 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 8: I Am the Resurrection and the Life

John 11 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.'"

— John 11:25 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- Lazarus — raised from the dead after four days in the tomb
- Martha and Mary — sisters who each express grief and faith to Jesus

BIG IDEA

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead — His greatest sign — proving He has power over death itself, even while He weeps with those who grieve.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — Jesus let Lazarus die before raising him, so that people would believe. Can you think of a time a hard situation later helped your faith grow?

FEEL — How does it feel to know Jesus weeps with you in your grief, not just from a distance?

DO — Bring a situation that feels hopeless to Jesus this week in prayer, trusting Him as "the resurrection and the life," even if the timing isn't yours.

Memory Verse: John 11:25

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 9: The King Comes to Jerusalem

John 12 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

As Jesus approaches His final week, He is worshiped by some and rejected by others — revealing that following Him always requires a response.

KEY VERSE

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

— John 12:24 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- Mary of Bethany — anoints Jesus with expensive perfume before His death
- Judas Iscariot — objects to the anointing while secretly planning betrayal

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "What's the most extravagant gift you've ever given or received?" Mary gives Jesus something worth a year's wages.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover Mary's anointing of Jesus at Bethany (John 12:1-11), the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (12:12-19), the Greeks who seek Jesus and His teaching about the grain of wheat (12:20-36), and John's summary of unbelief (12:37-50).
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The crowds welcome Jesus as a conquering king with palm branches, but Jesus enters on a humble donkey, fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy of a peaceful king, not a political conqueror. His "grain of wheat" teaching explains His whole mission: His death, which looks like defeat, is actually the means by which new life comes to many.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Judas criticized Mary's gift as wasteful, but John tells us his real motive was greed, not generosity (12:6). How can we tell the difference between a legitimate concern and a bad motive dressed up as a good one?
- The crowd wanted a king who would overthrow Rome. Jesus came to give His life instead. Why do you think people so often want God to fix their circumstances more than they want a relationship with Him?
- Jesus says a grain of wheat has to "die" to produce a harvest. What might that principle look like applied to our own lives, not just Jesus' death?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

The perfume Mary used, "spikenard," was imported from the Himalayas and extraordinarily costly — worth about 300 denarii, roughly a year's wages for a laborer (12:5). Anointing someone's feet, rather than the more customary head, and wiping them with her hair was an act of extreme humility and devotion, unusual enough that John records it in detail.

Waving palm branches while shouting "Hosanna" ("save now," from Psalm 118:25-26) had recent political associations — palm branches had been used as a symbol of Jewish nationalism during the Maccabean revolt roughly 160 years earlier. The crowd's actions carry unmistakable overtones of hoping Jesus would lead a political and military uprising against Rome.

Zechariah 9:9 had specifically prophesied Israel's king coming "lowly and riding on a donkey," not a warhorse — a symbol of peace, not conquest. John notes that the disciples didn't understand the connection until after Jesus' resurrection (12:16), which is a recurring pattern in John: full understanding often comes only in hindsight.

MEMORY VERSE

John 12:24 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 9: The King Comes to Jerusalem

John 12 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

— John 12:24 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- Mary of Bethany — anoints Jesus with expensive perfume before His death
- Judas Iscariot — objects to the anointing while secretly planning betrayal

BIG IDEA

As Jesus approaches His final week, He is worshiped by some and rejected by others — revealing that following Him always requires a response.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — The crowd cheered for Jesus one week and would call for His death soon after. What causes people's faith to be so easily swayed by circumstances?

FEEL — Mary gave Jesus her most valuable possession without holding back. How do you feel about what you're willing — or not willing — to give Him?

DO — This week, do one act of costly devotion to Jesus (time, money, or comfort) rather than a convenient one.

Memory Verse: John 12:24

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 10: The Upper Room: Love, Service, and Promise

John 13-14 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

On the night before His death, Jesus models humble love by washing His disciples' feet, gives a new commandment, and promises the Holy Spirit as their Helper.

KEY VERSE

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

— John 14:6 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- Peter — resists then accepts Jesus washing his feet
- Judas Iscariot — identified as the betrayer and departs into the night

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "What's a job or chore you'd consider 'beneath' you?" In this culture, foot washing was a servant's job — and Jesus does it Himself.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover Jesus washing the disciples' feet and the new commandment to love one another (John 13), then His comfort and promises in the upper room, including "the way, the truth, and the life" and the promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14).
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The God of the universe kneels to wash dirty feet, showing that true greatness looks like humble service, not status. Jesus' claim to be the only way to the Father is not narrow-mindedness but the natural conclusion of everything John has shown: if Jesus really is God in the flesh, then knowing Him is how we know God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Peter initially refused to let Jesus wash his feet. Why might it sometimes be harder to receive humble service than to give it?
- Jesus says people will know we are His disciples by our love for one another (13:35). What would that kind of love look like in your school or friend group?
- Jesus promises the Holy Spirit as a "Helper" who will be with the disciples forever (14:16). How does knowing God's Spirit lives in believers change how we face hard days?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

Washing feet was normally the task of the lowest household servant, since sandaled feet walking on dusty roads got genuinely filthy. That none of the disciples volunteered to do this for one another before Jesus did it Himself reveals an underlying competition for status among them (see Luke 22:24, describing this same evening).

The "new commandment" to love one another wasn't new in content — the Old Testament already commanded loving one's neighbor (Leviticus 19:18) — but new in its standard: "as I have loved you" (13:34), measured against Jesus' own sacrificial love, which was about to be displayed at the cross.

The Greek word John uses for the Holy Spirit, "Paraclete," carries the sense of an advocate, comforter, or one called alongside to help — a legal and relational term, not simply "a feeling of God's presence." Jesus promises the Spirit will not merely visit the disciples but permanently indwell them (14:17), a major shift from the Old Testament pattern of the Spirit coming upon specific people for specific tasks.

MEMORY VERSE

John 14:6 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 10: The Upper Room: Love, Service, and Promise

John 13-14 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

— **John 14:6 (NKJV)**

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- Peter — resists then accepts Jesus washing his feet
- Judas Iscariot — identified as the betrayer and departs into the night

BIG IDEA

On the night before His death, Jesus models humble love by washing His disciples' feet, gives a new commandment, and promises the Holy Spirit as their Helper.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — Jesus said He is **THE** way, not **A** way, to the Father. Why is that claim either fully true or not true at all — there's no comfortable middle ground?

FEEL — How does it feel to know the God who created everything chose to kneel down and serve His followers?

DO — Find one practical way to serve someone this week in a way that feels 'beneath' you, following Jesus' example.

Memory Verse: John 14:6

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 11: Vine, Branches, and the High Priestly Prayer

John 15-17 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

Jesus teaches that a fruitful life comes only from staying connected to Him, warns His followers of coming opposition, and prays for their unity and protection.

KEY VERSE

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

— John 15:5 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- The disciples — warned of coming persecution from the world
- Jesus — praying directly to the Father for His followers, present and future

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "Have you ever seen a plant cutting die after being separated from its roots?" That's the picture Jesus uses for life apart from Him.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover the vine and branches (John 15:1-17), Jesus' warning about the world's hatred and the Spirit's coming role (15:18-16:33), and His High Priestly Prayer for His disciples and future believers (John 17).
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus, as the true vine, is the source of all spiritual life and fruitfulness — apart from abiding in Him, effort produces nothing lasting. In John 17, Jesus prays not only for His first disciples but explicitly for "those who will believe in Me through their word" (17:20) — that includes every believer across history, prayed for by Jesus Himself hours before His crucifixion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What's the difference between a branch that's connected to the vine and one that's just lying near it?
- Jesus warns His disciples that the world will hate them because it hated Him first (15:18). How should that shape our expectations when following Jesus is unpopular?
- Jesus prays for believers to be unified "as We are" (17:11, 21-22). Why would unity among Christians matter so much to Jesus, right before His death?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

Israel itself was frequently pictured in the Old Testament as a vine that God planted but which produced only wild, useless grapes (Isaiah 5:1-7, Psalm 80:8-16) — a symbol of the nation's failure to be spiritually fruitful. By declaring Himself the true vine, Jesus positions Himself as the faithful Israel that the nation failed to be, and His disciples as the ones who, grafted into Him, can finally bear the fruit God intended.

The "world" (kosmos) in John's Gospel usually doesn't mean the physical earth or all people indiscriminately, but rather humanity organized in opposition to God and His purposes. Understanding this helps students see that Jesus isn't condemning creation or all unbelievers personally, but the systems and values hostile to Him.

John 17 is often called Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" because, like an Old Testament high priest interceding for the people, Jesus intercedes for His disciples right before His sacrificial death. It is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in Scripture and gives a rare, direct window into how Jesus prayed for those who would follow Him.

MEMORY VERSE

John 15:5 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 11: Vine, Branches, and the High Priestly Prayer

John 15-17 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

— **John 15:5 (NKJV)**

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- The disciples — warned of coming persecution from the world
- Jesus — praying directly to the Father for His followers, present and future

BIG IDEA

Jesus teaches that a fruitful life comes only from staying connected to Him, warns His followers of coming opposition, and prays for their unity and protection.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — What are some things people try to plug into instead of Jesus to produce a good, fruitful life?

FEEL — How does it feel to know Jesus prayed specifically for you (John 17:20), thousands of years before you were born?

DO — Pick one practical way to "abide" in Jesus this week (daily Bible reading, prayer, worship) and commit to it.

Memory Verse: John 15:5

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 12: Betrayed, Tried, and Crucified

John 18-19 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

Jesus willingly submits to arrest, unjust trials, and crucifixion — not as a victim of circumstance, but as the sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world.

KEY VERSE

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."

— **John 19:30 (NKJV)**

KEY PEOPLE

- Peter — denies knowing Jesus three times
- Pontius Pilate — the Roman governor who finds Jesus innocent yet sentences Him to death

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "Have you ever done something you regretted the moment after you did it?" Peter is about to have that exact experience.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover Jesus' arrest in the garden, Peter's denials, the trials before Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate (John 18), and Jesus' crucifixion, death, and burial (John 19).
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Every stage of Jesus' arrest, trial, and death shows Him in complete control, not swept along by events — He identifies Himself to the soldiers with divine authority (18:6), tells Pilate his power comes only from above (19:11), and declares "It is finished" as a shout of accomplishment, not defeat. His death fulfills what John the Baptist announced at the very start of the Gospel: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Peter denied Jesus three times after boldly promising he never would. What does that teach us about the difference between good intentions and real strength?
- Pilate declared Jesus innocent multiple times, yet still had Him crucified. What does that reveal about the danger of caring more about your reputation or position than doing what's right?
- Jesus said "It is finished" — a phrase used in that culture to mean a debt was fully paid. What debt was Jesus paying, and for whom?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

Jesus faced a total of six trial stages — three Jewish (Annas, Caiaphas/Sanhedrin, and a morning confirmation) and three Roman (Pilate, Herod Antipas, back to Pilate) — an unusually rushed and irregular legal process, especially given it occurred at night and during a major festival, both violations of standard Jewish legal procedure.

Pilate's position was politically precarious: Rome had already reprimanded him for provoking unrest in Judea, and the phrase the crowd uses — "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend" (19:12) — was a direct threat to report him to Emperor Tiberius, which explains why he capitulates despite believing Jesus innocent.

Crucifixion was reserved by Rome for the worst offenders — slaves, rebels, and those convicted of treason — precisely because of its extreme, prolonged public agony, intended as both punishment and deterrent. That the "King of the Jews" sign Pilate ordered (19:19-22) was written in three languages (Hebrew, Latin, Greek) ensured that virtually everyone passing by Jerusalem's roads during Passover would read Rome's charge against Him.

MEMORY VERSE

John 19:30 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Session 12: Betrayed, Tried, and Crucified

John 18-19 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."

— **John 19:30 (NKJV)**

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- Peter — denies knowing Jesus three times
- Pontius Pilate — the Roman governor who finds Jesus innocent yet sentences Him to death

BIG IDEA

Jesus willingly submits to arrest, unjust trials, and crucifixion — not as a victim of circumstance, but as the sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — Jesus stayed in control and at peace through betrayal, injustice, and pain. What helped Him do that?

FEEL — How does it feel to know Jesus went through all of this on purpose, specifically because of His love for you?

DO — Spend a few quiet minutes this week simply thanking Jesus for what His death accomplished, without asking Him for anything.

Memory Verse: John 19:30

TEACHER GUIDE

Session 13: He Is Risen: Resurrection and Restoration

John 20-21 • The Gospel of John

BIG IDEA

Jesus rises from the dead, proving His victory over sin and death, appears to His disciples to strengthen their faith, and personally restores Peter to ministry.

KEY VERSE

"And Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

— John 20:30-31 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE

- Mary Magdalene — the first person to see and speak with the risen Jesus
- Thomas — moves from doubt to worship
- Peter — restored by Jesus after his three denials

45-MINUTE SESSION FLOW

Time	Segment	What Happens
5 min	Opening / Icebreaker	Ask: "What's the best news you've ever received?" Nothing compares to the news the disciples receive on Easter morning.
20 min	Bible Teaching	Cover the empty tomb and Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene, His appearances to the disciples (including doubting Thomas) in John 20, and His restoration of Peter by the Sea of Galilee in John 21.
10 min	Discussion	Use the discussion questions below in small groups or as a whole group.
5 min	Christ Connection & Memory Verse	Tie back to the big idea and read the memory verse together three times.
5 min	Handout & Prayer	Distribute the one-page handout, allow quiet time for Think/Feel/Do, close in prayer, and celebrate finishing the whole Gospel of John together.

CHRIST CONNECTION

The resurrection is the hinge of the entire Gospel — everything John has shown about Jesus being the eternal Word, the Good Shepherd, and the Resurrection and the Life is proven true by an empty tomb. And Jesus' three-fold

restoration of Peter ("Do you love Me? ... Feed My sheep," 21:15-17) mirrors Peter's three denials, showing that failure is never final with Jesus — He restores and recommissions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Thomas needed to see the risen Jesus for himself before he believed. Jesus says those who believe without seeing are especially blessed (20:29). What helps you believe when you can't physically see something?
- Jesus asked Peter the same question three times — "Do you love Me?" — matching Peter's three denials. Why do you think Jesus chose to restore him this specific way rather than just moving on?
- John says he wrote all of this "that you may believe" (20:31). After 13 sessions in this Gospel, what has most convinced you about who Jesus is?

TEACHER BACKGROUND NOTES: HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

That women, including Mary Magdalene, are recorded as the first witnesses of the resurrection is historically significant: in first-century Jewish culture, women's testimony was not considered legally reliable in court. A fabricated story would almost certainly have invented male first witnesses instead — the Gospel's account works against the grain of what a forger would choose to write, which many historians consider evidence of its authenticity.

Thomas's absence when Jesus first appeared and his demand for physical proof (20:24-25) reflects an understandable skepticism, not weak faith — crucifixion victims did not survive, and resurrection was outside anyone's category of expectation. His eventual confession, "My Lord and my God!" (20:28), is the clearest direct statement of Jesus' full deity in the entire Gospel.

The charcoal fire Jesus prepares for Peter in John 21:9 is the same detail (a rare word for "charcoal fire") used only one other place in John — where Peter warmed himself while denying Jesus (18:18). John likely intends readers to notice the echo: Jesus meets Peter's failure at the very kind of fire where it happened, and turns the scene into restoration instead of shame.

MEMORY VERSE

John 20:31 (NKJV) — recite together at the start and close of the session.

Session 13: He Is Risen: Resurrection and Restoration

John 20-21 • The Gospel of John

KEY VERSE

"And Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

— John 20:30-31 (NKJV)

KEY PEOPLE TO REMEMBER

- Mary Magdalene — the first person to see and speak with the risen Jesus
- Thomas — moves from doubt to worship
- Peter — restored by Jesus after his three denials

BIG IDEA

Jesus rises from the dead, proving His victory over sin and death, appears to His disciples to strengthen their faith, and personally restores Peter to ministry.

MY NOTES

THINK • FEEL • DO

THINK — Looking back over all 13 sessions in John, what is the single biggest thing you now understand about who Jesus is?

FEEL — How do you feel knowing that, like Peter, your failures don't disqualify you from being used by Jesus?

DO — Write down one specific way you will follow Jesus differently now that you've studied this Gospel, and share it with a leader or friend for accountability.

Memory Verse: John 20:31