



# EXPLORE THE BIBLE.®

## Personal Study Guide

Spring 2023 | KJV



...ed  
...ye are  
...another.  
...am, Lord,  
...wered him,  
...ollow me now;  
...afterwards.  
...Lord, why cannot  
...lay down my life

...im, Wilt thou lay down  
...Verily, verily, I say unto  
...shall not crow, till thou hast  
...ce.

### OF MANY MANSIONS

...not your heart be troubled: ye  
...believe in God, believe also in me.  
...my Father's house are many man-  
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told  
...ou. <sup>3</sup>I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>4</sup>  
...And if I go and prepare a place for you, <sup>5</sup>I  
...will come again, and receive you unto my-  
...self; that <sup>6</sup>where I am, *there* ye may be also.  
...<sup>7</sup>And whither I go ye know, and the way  
...ye know.

### JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

...Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know  
...not whither thou goest; and how can we  
...know the way?  
...<sup>6</sup>Jesus saith unto him, I am <sup>7</sup>the way,  
...the truth, and <sup>8</sup>the life: no man cometh  
...unto the Father, but by me.  
...<sup>9</sup>If ye had known me, ye should have  
...known my Father also; and from henceforth  
...ye know him, and have seen him.  
...<sup>10</sup>Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the  
...Father, and it sufficeth us.  
...<sup>11</sup>Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long  
...time with you, and yet hast thou not  
...known me, Philip? <sup>12</sup>he that hath seen me

U N D E R S T A N D | E X P L O R E | A P P L Y

# John 12-21



# ONE MORE THING

“Just one more thing before I go . . .”

It might be a parent talking to their college-bound freshman, a friend wrapping up a phone call with a really great story, or boss leaving last-minute instructions before a business trip. Whatever the specific situation, we’ve all found ourselves with a lot to say and not enough time to say it. So, in a last-ditch effort to squeeze every second out of every minute, we add one more thing to the list.

That’s similar to what we find throughout John 12–21. Jesus knew His “hour” was coming. His arrest and crucifixion were close. In His last few hours, He had a few more things to share with His disciples. Even after three years of teaching them through His words and His example, Jesus still had things to tell them about being His people in a fallen world.

Thankfully, Jesus’s crucifixion was not the end of the story. He rose from the dead on that first Easter morning, so He would continue walking with them, teaching them through the work of the Holy Spirit. Plus, He promised to come back for them one day—and anyone else who chose to accept His offer of salvation by faith.

That’s the “one more thing” John wanted his readers to understand more than anything else. All of Jesus’s teaching, all of His miracles, even His death and resurrection pointed in one direction. God’s Son had come to earth to be humanity’s Savior. Of all the things He said and did, the one thing Jesus wants us to grasp is that we can find forgiveness for our sins and experience eternal life through Him. If you’re ready to accept the salvation that only He can provide, here’s what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God’s Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen.”

---

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Connect with a local church that will help you grow spiritually and demonstrate your faith in Jesus publicly by following Him in baptism by immersion.

# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

Word Wise .....	6
Bible Reading Plan .....	7
Biblical Background .....	8
What Jesus Taught About Love .....	127
Coming Next Quarter .....	130



## SESSIONS

### SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF

<i>Mar. 5</i>	Session 1: <b>Why Wasn't This Sold?</b> (John 12:1-11) .....	10
<i>Mar. 12</i>	Session 2: <b>If It Dies</b> (John 12:20-33) .....	19
<i>Mar. 19</i>	Session 3: <b>I Will Come Again</b> (John 13:31-14:6) .....	28
<i>Mar. 26</i>	Session 4: <b>Peace I Leave</b> (John 14:16-29) .....	37
<i>Apr. 2</i>	Session 5: <b>Remain in Me</b> (John 15:1-17) .....	46
<i>Apr. 9</i>	Session 6: <b>I Have Seen*</b> (John 20:1-18) .....	55
<i>Apr. 16</i>	Session 7: <b>When the Spirit Comes</b> (John 15:26-27; 16:7-15) .	64
<i>Apr. 23</i>	Session 8: <b>I Pray</b> (John 17:13-26) .....	73
<i>Apr. 30</i>	Session 9: <b>I Am He</b> (John 18:1-11) .....	82
<i>May 7</i>	Session 10: <b>I Find No Fault</b> (John 18:28-40) .....	91
<i>May 14</i>	Session 11: <b>It Is Finished</b> (John 19:17-30) .....	100
<i>May 21</i>	Session 12: <b>Reach out Your Hand</b> (John 20:19-29) .....	109
<i>May 28</i>	Session 13: <b>Do You Love Me?</b> (John 21:15-23) .....	118

\*Evangelistic Emphasis

# MEET THE WRITER

**G.B. Howell, Jr.** wrote this study of John 12–21. Dr. Howell graduated from Carson-Newman University (Bachelor of Religion), Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Master of Divinity; Master of Biblical Archaeology), and Oxford Graduate School (Doctor of Philosophy). He served as content editor of *Biblical Illustrator* until his retirement.

*Explore the Bible: Adult Personal Study Guide KJV* (ISSN 2330-7227; Item 005573497) is published quarterly by Lifeway Christian Resources, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707, Ben Mandrell, President. © 2022 Lifeway Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com), or write Lifeway Church Resources Customer Service, 200 Powell Place, Suite 100, Brentwood, TN 37027-7707. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, email [orderentry@lifeway.com](mailto:orderentry@lifeway.com), fax 615.251.5933, or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. Read Lifeway's full doctrinal guideline online at [lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline](http://lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline). The Key Doctrine statements in this study guide are adapted from these guidelines.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

The suggestions for pronouncing Bible names are from *That's Easy for You to Say: Your Quick Guide to Pronouncing Bible Names* by W. Murray Severance, © 1997 by Broadman & Holman Publishers. Used by permission.

Explore the Bible  
Adult Personal Study Guide  
Spring 2023  
Volume 9, Number 3

Mike Livingstone  
Content Editor

Amber Vaden  
Team Leader

Dwayne McCrary  
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

Ken Braddy  
Director of Sunday School

Brian Daniel  
Director, Adult Ministry

Send questions/comments to  
Content Editor by email:  
[Mike.Livingstone@lifeway.com](mailto:Mike.Livingstone@lifeway.com);  
or by mail to  
Content Editor, Explore the Bible:  
Adult Personal Study Guide,  
200 Powell Place, Suite 100,  
Brentwood, TN 37027-7707;  
or make comments on the web at  
[lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com).

Printed in the United States  
of America

# FROM THE TEAM

When someone dear to us passes away, our last conversations with that person take on new meaning. We may have had other discussions that were more extended, but those last words seem to overshadow everything that came before. Even as time passes, those final exchanges seem to dominate our memories and color our perceptions of that loved one. We may even find ourselves reliving those last conversations, remembering every detail including what was going on around us.

In his Gospel, John dedicated nearly half of what he wrote to the week leading up to Jesus's death, and a large portion of those words focus on the last hours of His life. All the actions we find in John 13:1–19:42 took place during the final 24 hours leading up to Jesus's arrest and crucifixion. It begins with the washing of the disciples' feet and ends with Jesus's body being placed in a tomb. He included Jesus calling on John to care for Mary in His place, their final conversation before Jesus's death.

During this study of John 12–21, we will walk with John as he relayed those final conversations, teachings, predictions, prayers, denials, and actions of Jesus. In doing so, we will be reminded of His purpose, of the hope He offers, and the joy of being a disciple He loves.

In His service,

**G. Dwayne McCrary**

[dwayne.mccrary@lifeway.com](mailto:dwayne.mccrary@lifeway.com)



# WORD WISE

**Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).**

**Barabbas** [buh RAB uhs]—a murderer and insurrectionist held in Roman custody at the time of Jesus’s trial; when given the choice by Pilate, the Jewish crowd demanded the release of Barabbas rather than Jesus (John 18:39-40)

**Bethany**—a town two miles southeast of Jerusalem (John 11:18); home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:1; 12:1)

**Bethsaida** [beth-SAY ih duh]—a fishing village on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee; hometown of Andrew, Peter, and Philip (John 1:44)

**Caiaphas** [KIGH uh fuhs]—high priest during the time of Jesus’s trial and crucifixion; leader in the plot to arrest and execute Jesus (John 18:28)

**Cleophas** [KLEE oh fuhs]—husband of one of the women named Mary who witnessed Jesus’s crucifixion (John 19:25); some speculate he was one of the two men who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection (Cleopas in Luke 24:18).

**Denarii** [dih NEHR ih igh]—plural form of denarius, the daily wage of a common laborer in the first century (see John 12:5)

**Golgotha** [GAHL guh thuh]—Aramaic word meaning “the skull”; the place where Jesus was crucified (John 19:17)

**Kidron Valley**—a deep ravine just east of Jerusalem that runs north to south and separates the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives; after the Last Supper, Jesus went through the Kidron Valley on His way to the Mount of Olives (John 18:1)

**Mary Magdalene**—the woman from whom Jesus cast out seven demons and one of the inner circle of Jesus’s supporters (Luke 8:1-3); a witness to His crucifixion (John 19:25); the first to encounter Jesus after His resurrection (John 20:1-18); from Magdala, a fishing village on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee

**Spikenard**—an oil derived from the roots of a tree that grew in northern India; it was red and had a sweet aroma (John 12:3; see also Song of Sol. 4:13-14; Mark 14:3)

**Pilate**—Roman governor of Judea during the time of Jesus; though he did not find Jesus guilty of death, he yielded to the Jews and allowed Jesus to be put to death (John 18:29,38; 19:4,6)

# BIBLE READING PLAN

## MARCH

- 1. John 12:1-3
- 2. John 12:4-8
- 3. John 12:9-11
- 4. John 12:12-16
- 5. John 12:17-19
- 6. John 12:20-22
- 7. John 12:23-26
- 8. John 12:27-29
- 9. John 12:30-34
- 10. John 12:35-36
- 11. John 12:37-43
- 12. John 12:44-47
- 13. John 12:48-50
- 14. John 13:1
- 15. John 13:2-5
- 16. John 13:6-11
- 17. John 13:12-15
- 18. John 13:16-17
- 19. John 13:18-20
- 20. John 13:21-25
- 21. John 13:26-30
- 22. John 13:31-33
- 23. John 13:34-35
- 24. John 13:36-38
- 25. John 14:1-4
- 26. John 14:5-7
- 27. John 14:8-11
- 28. John 14:12-14
- 29. John 14:15-17
- 30. John 14:18-21
- 31. John 14:22-26

## APRIL

- 1. John 14:27-31
- 2. John 15:1-4
- 3. John 15:5-8
- 4. John 15:9-11
- 5. John 15:12-17
- 6. John 15:18-21
- 7. John 15:22-25
- 8. John 15:26-27
- 9. John 16:1-4
- 10. John 16:5-11
- 11. John 16:12-15
- 12. John 16:16-18
- 13. John 16:19-22
- 14. John 16:23-24
- 15. John 16:25-28
- 16. John 16:29-33
- 17. John 17:1-2
- 18. John 17:3-5
- 19. John 17:6-8
- 20. John 17:9-12
- 21. John 17:13-15
- 22. John 17:16-19
- 23. John 17:20-23
- 24. John 17:24-26
- 25. John 18:1-5
- 26. John 18:6-9
- 27. John 18:10-14
- 28. John 18:15-18
- 29. John 18:19-24
- 30. John 18:25-27

## MAY

- 1. John 18:28-32
- 2. John 18:33-36
- 3. John 18:37-40
- 4. John 19:1-5
- 5. John 19:6-7
- 6. John 19:8-11
- 7. John 19:12-16
- 8. John 19:17-18
- 9. John 19:19-22
- 10. John 19:23-24
- 11. John 19:25-27
- 12. John 19:28-30
- 13. John 19:31-37
- 14. John 19:38-42
- 15. John 20:1-2
- 16. John 20:3-7
- 17. John 20:8-10
- 18. John 20:11-15
- 19. John 20:16-18
- 20. John 20:19-23
- 21. John 20:24-25
- 22. John 20:26-29
- 23. John 20:30-31
- 24. John 21:1-3
- 25. John 21:4-7
- 26. John 21:8-11
- 27. John 21:12-14
- 28. John 21:15-17
- 29. John 21:18-19
- 30. John 21:20-23
- 31. John 21:24-25

# BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

The first half of John’s Gospel (chaps. 1–11) tells primarily of seven “signs” Jesus performed. These highlight His role as Messiah. The second half (chaps. 12–21) focuses primarily on events surrounding the final week of Jesus—leading up to and including His arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection.

The two halves open and close with similar scenes and statements. For instance, John declared early in the second half of his Gospel that Jesus “loved his own which were in the world” (13:1). This echoes what John stated earlier about Jesus: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (1:11). Additionally, the first half closes with climatic scenes related to Lazarus being brought back to life. The second half culminates with scenes related to the empty tomb of Jesus and His subsequent appearances.

Reading through the second half of John’s Gospel, three themes emerge. These focus on the responses of people, the words of Jesus, and the actions of Jesus.

- **Perplexed**—John consistently portrayed people who were puzzled by what was happening. The disciples were perplexed when Jesus allowed Mary to anoint His feet with expensive oil (12:3-8). They were perplexed as the people shouted “Hosanna” when Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem (12:12-16). The religious leaders did not know what to do with Jesus (12:19). The disciples were confounded as Jesus took a basin and towel and washed their feet (13:1-20). The women, Peter, and John were perplexed when they found the tomb empty (20:1-14).
- **Promises**—Jesus told His disciples they soon would not see Him, they would mourn, weep, and have sorrow. Soon afterward, they would experience joy, a reference to His burial and subsequent resurrection (16:16-29). He promised that if He went away, He would send the Holy Spirit as a Counselor (15:26). He also promised if He were lifted up (meaning crucified), He would draw all people to Himself (12:32).
- **Proof**—The second half of John contains many instances that prove the reliability of what Jesus had said or done. For example, although the disciples did not understand what was happening at the triumphal entry, they recalled after the resurrection what the Scripture had declared prophetically about Jesus (12:16). The Lord’s words became the proof He had come from God (16:30). The wounds in the hands and side of Jesus proved to Thomas that He was alive (20:26-28). Finally, John said the proof of what he had written in his Gospel came because he had been an eyewitness to the events (21:24).

May what you read in John’s Gospel help you “believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and . . . by believing [may you] have life in his name” (20:31).

# OUTLINE

- I. PRELUDE: CHRIST AS THE ETERNAL WORD (JOHN 1:1-18)**
- II. PRESENTATION: CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD (JOHN 1:19-12:50)**
- III. PREPARATION: INSTRUCTION OF THE TWELVE BY THE SON OF GOD (JOHN 13:1-17:26)**
  - A. The Last Supper (John 13:1-38)
  - B. The way to the Father (John 14:1-31)
  - C. The true vine (John 15:1-27)
  - D. The gift of the Spirit (John 16:1-33)
  - E. Jesus's high-priestly prayer (John 17:11-26)
- IV. PASSION: SUFFERING OF CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD (JOHN 18:1-20:31)**
  - A. His arrest, trial, and death (John 18:1-19:42)
  - B. His triumph over death (John 20:1-31)
- V. POSTLUDE: THE CONTINUING WORK OF THE SON OF GOD (JOHN 21:1-25)**
  - A. Appearances to His disciples (John 21:1-14)
  - B. Assignment to His disciples (John 21:15-25)



## ON THE COVER

Olive trees growing in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem (See Session 9).



# *Why Wasn't This Sold?*

Jesus is worthy of our worship as the promised Messiah, the Son of God.

## **JOHN 12:1-11**

On December 22, 1874, President Ulysses S. Grant and his wife, Julia, hosted King Kalakaua of the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) for the first official state dinner at the White House. One can imagine the amount of preparation that went into that meal. Few questioned the presence of taste testers required by King Kalakaua to make sure the guest was honored appropriately. We will find a way to honor those we believe to be worthy of being honored.

**What is the most formal dinner you have ever attended? Are you more comfortable with being the host/hostess or being a guest? Explain.**

---

---

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## JOHN 12:1-19

After raising Lazarus, Jesus went to Ephraim before returning to Bethany where He and His disciples were invited to a dinner. Some readers mistakenly think the meal happened at Lazarus's home. Parallel accounts indicate the banquet occurred at the home of Simon the leper (Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9). Lazarus was a special guest. Mary and Martha, Lazarus's sisters, were present. Martha helped serve the meal, after which Mary anointed Jesus's feet.

Some confuse this incident with the narrative in Luke 7:36-50. Similarities include the name of the host (Simon) and the act of anointing Jesus with precious ointment. However, significant differences regarding the place, people, and purpose demonstrate these were separate events. The banquet in Luke 7 happened during Jesus's Galilean ministry, while John 12 was set in Bethany of Judea. Simon in Luke 7 was a Pharisee, not a leper. The woman of Luke 7 was identified as a notorious sinner, while Mary of Bethany had no history of infamy. In John 12, Lazarus was present, unlike the record of Luke 7. In John 12, Judas objected to what he considered wasteful use of a valuable commodity. Luke did not mention such complaints. Finally, unlike Luke's account, John mentions that dinner attracted many Jews who heard about Lazarus's being raised.

The day after the banquet, Jesus entered Jerusalem as people cheered and waved palm branches. They proclaimed Jesus to be the King of Israel who came in the name of the Lord. Some were present when Jesus raised Lazarus. They testified about His amazing miracle, attracting people who wanted to see the One who could raise the dead. The people's exuberance further infuriated the Jewish leaders. They feared Jesus's popularity, saying among themselves that the whole world was going after Him.

**As you read John 12:1-11, underline incidences where people expressed their faith as a follower of Jesus. In contrast, why did others reject Him? What kept them from believing in Jesus?**

---

---

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## HONORED (JOHN 12:1-3)

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

<sup>2</sup> There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

### VERSES 1-2

*Passover* commemorated the night the Lord passed through Egypt killing the firstborn, except where the doorposts had been painted with the blood of a sacrificial lamb. Jews celebrated this miracle annually during the spring. Jerusalem's population would swell by an additional 100,000 people as the faithful came to celebrate. Many visitors stayed in the homes of friends or family members who lived either in Jerusalem or one of the nearby villages, such as **•Bethany**. Some people slept in one of the caves that dotted the landscape around Jerusalem.

John gave no indication about how much time had passed between Jesus's raising *Lazarus . . . from the dead* and the dinner described. The dinner was a violation of the Sanhedrin's edict. They "had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he [Jesus] were, he should shew it, that they might take him" (11:57).

During a dinner, the main meal of the day in the first century, family members typically gathered around a large bowl or pot of soup or stew. They reclined either on pillows or wide couches arranged in a U-shaped format known as a triclinium. Their heads faced the center and their feet extended outward. Propped up on their left arms, they ate with their right hands from the shared bowls in the center of the triclinium. The hostess would step into the "U" to refill and replace serving dishes.

This dinner was given to honor Jesus. Mary, Martha, Lazarus, the twelve disciples, and likely others were present. We are not told by John who the host was, but we know Martha was involved as a server. Lazarus may have also been honored since he was reclining as well.

It would be natural for a wealthy friend with a large home to host such a dinner for the twenty or more guests. Custom would also allow for Martha to serve at the dinner, especially if the host and Lazarus's family were friends or neighbors. Martha, Mary, and their friends wanted to honor Jesus for His miracle of bringing Lazarus back from the dead.

### **How should we respond to Jesus's work in our lives?**

---

---

#### **VERSE 3**

Mary's actions were startling for several reasons. First, Jews considered washing someone's feet a degrading task, typically reserved for servants. This explains Peter's protest when Jesus washed his feet (John 13:4-9). Mary did not wash the Lord's feet with water, though; she **anointed** them with **spikenard**.

Second, the perfume was extravagant. The **pound** was a Roman measurement, which weighed about twelve ounces and was about a pint of liquid. The perfume was pure, not diluted with other oils or extracts. The **spikenard** was an oil derived from the roots of a tree that grew in northern India; it was red and had a sweet aroma. John's including the description of the scent filling the house reinforces the fact that he was an eyewitness to the event.

Third, Mary uncovered **her hair**, let it down, and used it to wipe dry the feet of Jesus. Respectable Jewish women of the first century kept their hair concealed. Keeping it covered indicated personal piety. Jewish law at the time allowed a man to divorce his wife if she went in public with her hair uncovered. Mary, though, seemingly with reckless abandon, disregarded cultural expectations and concerns. Expressing a balance of humility and devotion, she instead focused solely on honoring and worshiping Jesus.

### **How do we balance when there is conflict between what our culture finds acceptable and our expressions of worship?**

---

---

---

## KEY DOCTRINE: *Stewardship*

Believers should recognize that their time, talents, and material possessions are entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. (See Deuteronomy 8:18; Romans 12:1-2.)

### QUESTIONED (JOHN 12:4-8)

**<sup>4</sup> Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, <sup>5</sup> Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? <sup>6</sup> This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. <sup>7</sup> Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. <sup>8</sup> For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.**

### VERSES 4-6

**Judas** was the Greek rendering of “Judah,” which in Hebrew means “Praise Yahweh.” It was a common name in the first century. Jesus had two disciples named Judas (Luke 6:12-16). Of those, one was infamous for betraying Jesus. Likely to avoid confusion, the other Gospel writers referred to the other disciple named Judas as “Thaddaeus” (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18). **Iscariot** means “man of Kerioth” in Aramaic. Kerioth was a small town east of the Dead Sea. It had been the earlier location of Ar, the capital of Moab. If Kerioth was Judas’s hometown, he was the only disciple not from Galilee.

The Gospel writers regularly included two details about Judas Iscariot: he was one of the Twelve, and he was the one who betrayed Jesus. Matthew, Mark, and Luke each include a list of the disciples (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:13-16). In each list Judas Iscariot is named last and identified as the betrayer of Jesus.

Along with the other disciples, Judas had heard Jesus preach and teach; he had witnessed the miracles. Additionally, he, along with a partner, had gone out and proclaimed a message of repentance. He may have been involved in casting out demons and anointing the sick with oil (Mark 6:7-13). Judas had earned the trust of the other disciples; he served as the group’s treasurer, the one who **had the money bag**.

The first recorded words of Judas in Scripture were in protest of Mary's extravagance. His words vividly contrasted his greed, selfishness, and deceit with her generosity, selflessness, and devotion. The value of Mary's perfume was about **three hundred pence** (•denarii). Laborers were paid a denarius a day in the first century. Jews did not work on the Sabbath or on holy days, thus Mary's gift was equivalent to about a year's salary. He, **a thief**, knew Mary's extravagance meant he would have no opportunity to get his hands on her money.

Of the Gospel writers, only John indicated that Judas kept the money-bag. This money was used to meet the needs of the disciples and to help the poor (13:29). Additionally, only John gave the detail that Judas would steal from the bag.

There are many things we do not know about Judas Iscariot. We do not know his occupation before becoming a disciple. We do not know when or where it was that Jesus called him to be a disciple.

In addition to the two facts the Gospel writers always include about Judas, however, these three verses let us know at least four other things about this traitor. He was self-serving, greedy, hypocritical (pretending to care about the poor), and he was a thief.

### **How can a person's misguided agenda discourage others from honoring Christ?**

---

---

#### **VERSES 7-8**

Judas was not the only disciple to protest Mary's extravagance. Some of the others scolded her, but they are not named (Matt. 26:8-9; Mark 14:4-5). Jesus responded sternly to their rebuke, issuing a command to **let her alone**. It was not a suggestion or request; it was a command.

Jesus knew Mary could have sold the perfume. He also knew she had held onto it instead, keeping it for His pending burial. Jesus considered Mary's action to be noble—a beautiful gesture and a good deed (Matt. 26:10).

Some have used the Lord's statement **the poor always ye have with you** as an excuse not to help people in need. Such thinking

violates what God said to the ancient Israelites: “For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land” (Deut. 15:11).

Jesus’s focus already was on His death and burial: ***me ye have not always***. He knew Mary would not have many more opportunities to express her devotion to Him. As had happened when she sat at the feet of Jesus rather than busy herself with serving guests, Mary, with this perfume, had again made the better choice. It was not going to be taken from her (Luke 10:42).

**How do we reconcile Judas’s being involved in ministry as a disciple with his betrayal that led to Jesus being arrested?**

---

---

## **DIVISION** (JOHN 12:9-11)

**<sup>9</sup> Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; <sup>11</sup> Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.**

### **VERSES 9-11**

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the chief priests and Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin. They had been worried that everyone would become a follower of Jesus and that they would lose their places of authority. “Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put [Jesus] to death” (John 11:47-53).

News had spread of Lazarus walking out of his tomb. One just can’t keep news like that quiet. Curiosity seekers made their way to Bethany. The phrase ***much people of the Jews*** did not refer to religious leaders. Many likely were Jews who visited Jerusalem for Passover. They were not like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus—faithful followers of Jesus. Nor were they openly hostile toward Him, as the religious leaders had been. They had heard what Jesus had done and wanted to

see this man who had performed the impossible. Additionally, they wanted to see Lazarus, *whom* Jesus *had raised from the dead*.

The very thing the religious leaders feared began to happen. *Many of the Jews* saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears. They began deserting the chief priests' authority and began believing in Jesus.

John recorded numerous times the Jews had attempted to seize Jesus and kill Him (5:18; 7:1,19,25; 10:33,39). Now, not only did the religious leaders want to kill Jesus, they wanted to *put Lazarus also to death*.

The contrast couldn't have been greater. The chief priests saw their crowd of followers dwindling and the number following Jesus growing. The priests were fearful of losing their influence. The priests wanted Lazarus dead; Jesus offered life. The priests grew increasingly resentful and plotted retaliation. Those who came to faith in Christ certainly rejoiced in He who is the resurrection and the life (11:25). The chief priests wanted all this talk and excitement silenced; people could not help but tell what they had seen and heard. The light had shined in the darkness, and yet the darkness would not win (1:4-5).

**How can the way a person honors Christ bring others to Him?**

---

---

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Review passages that interpret a narrative.*

Review Romans 12:1-2 and compare Mary's sacrificial act of love with the idea of a believer's sacrifice in the Romans passage. How do Mary's actions serve as an illustration of what Paul was teaching in Romans 12?

---

---

---

---





## *If It Dies*

Jesus offers hope to those who seek Him.

### JOHN 12:20-33

Most of us have a favorite fruit. At some point, a seed was planted that led to the producing of that fruit. While the seed may look nothing like the fruit, it sacrificed itself in producing the plant or tree that eventually led to the piece of fruit we enjoy. Unless the seed “died,” it could not have taken root and produced growth. Even so, Jesus predicted He had to die to provide eternal life.

**Share about your favorite fruit. What steps are required for you to enjoy that piece of fruit?**

---

---

---

# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **JOHN 12:20-50**

Jesus came not only as Messiah of the Jews but Savior of the world. While He primarily ministered among the Jews, Jesus made it clear that God also loves the Gentiles who seek and serve Him. When some God-fearing Greeks wanted to meet Jesus, the event triggered Jesus's proclamation of His impending death. As His hour approached, He again explained what was about to happen. As He often did, Jesus used metaphors and symbols to teach. He pointed out that a seed had to die to produce life.

Jesus's analogy of dying to live not only applied to Him, but also to anyone who followed Him. Some people might try to preserve their ways of life rather than die to self and come after Him. In doing so, they would lose the opportunity for greater, eternal life. In contrast, Jesus was willing to yield His life to glorify the Father and provide salvation for believers. His death would result in drawing people to Himself for God's glory. Just as some Greeks had been attracted to Jesus, even so His death on the cross would bring countless others to Him.

Using another metaphor, Jesus described Himself as the light of the world. He urged His followers to believe in the light and walk in the light. Addressing His earthly life, Jesus warned that the light would only be with them for a short while. They should take advantage of His presence to grow stronger in their faith and to put that faith into practice as children of the light.

Unfortunately, in keeping with Isaiah's prophecies, many people were blind to the light and refused to believe. Some of the people who heard Jesus believed in Him but were reluctant to do so openly for fear of the religious leaders. They desired the approval of people rather than laying down their lives for Christ.

**Read John 12:20-33 in your Bible, highlighting words that point to actions that indicate a person believes in Jesus. How does becoming a believer in Jesus affect a person's life?**

---

---

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## INTRODUCED (JOHN 12:20-22)

<sup>20</sup> And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: <sup>21</sup> The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. <sup>22</sup> Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

## VERSES 20-22

John highlighted Jesus's entrance into the city—a triumphant scene for the Jews (12:12-19)—in close connection to *certain Greeks* who came looking for Him. The phrase *certain Greeks* could refer to unidentified Gentiles rather than specifically to people from Greece. The previous events highlighted what Jesus meant to the Jews; the events that followed highlight that He came for all peoples and all nations—including Gentiles.

Why would Gentiles want *to worship at the feast* of Passover? These Gentiles may have been “God-fearers,” individuals who walked away from pagan religions and worshiped the God of the Jews. Rather than fully embracing Judaism, God-fearers did not participate in all the requirements of the Law, including circumcision (Acts 10:1-2,22).

The text does not explain if or when *Philip* may have previously met these visitors. They may have approached *Philip* because he had a Greek name or because they knew he was from *Bethsaida*, a town on the Sea of Galilee. Many of its residents reflected a Greek rather than Jewish influence. As such, Philip was likely comfortable with dealing with non-Jews.

The verb tense indicates these visitors continually requested of Philip; they wanted to *see Jesus*. Wanting to *see Jesus* meant they wanted to interview Him. Maybe their curiosity had been piqued by the reception Jesus received when he rode victoriously into Jerusalem. Maybe they had heard about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Regardless, they wanted to know this Jesus better.

Philip told Andrew, who was also from *Bethsaida* (and the only other disciple with a Greek name), about the men's request. Together, Philip and Andrew told Jesus about the men who wanted to meet Him.

**What makes a person approachable? How does our personal identity serve as a door to point others to Jesus?**

---

---

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Dig deeper into the usage of key words or phrases.*

Examine Jesus's reference to His hour in His response to His mother. (John 2:4) Notice the difference between Jesus's reference to "My hour" and "the hour" in John 4:21-23. Consider how the early failures of Jesus's enemies related to the fact that His hour had not yet arrived (John 7:30). Read John 13:1 to see another description of Jesus's hour. How do these references help us better understand John 12:23?

---

---

---

**DIES** (JOHN 12:23-26)

**<sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. <sup>25</sup> He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. <sup>26</sup> If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.**

**VERSES 23-24**

John gave no indication why they wanted to meet Jesus, nor did he state that Jesus actually met with them. News of the Gentiles' request, however, triggered something in Jesus. It elicited an announcement that **the hour** had **come** for Him to die for the whole world—Jews and Gentiles alike.

Four principles are affirmed in Jesus's reply. First, for Jesus to say *the hour* had *come* meant He was not passively subjected to the circumstances. Second, Jesus's speaking of the hour at this point marked a turn in His usage of the word. Previously, He had spoken of the hour—meaning His death, burial, and resurrection—as a future event (John 2:4; 4:21,23; 7:30; 8:20). Beginning here and moving forward, the hour was imminent (12:27; 13:1; 17:1). Third, the prophet Daniel had spoken of the ***Son of man*** as the one who would come and unite heaven and earth (Dan. 7:13-14). Jesus used the term because He, the Messiah, had come to fulfill that prophecy. Fourth, Jesus would be ***glorified*** through His death, which He explained in the statement that followed.

The image of planting a seed would have been familiar to those listening to Jesus. Rabbis used the terminology to describe the death of the physical body and the resurrection that followed. Greeks, who were involved in fertility cults, used similar language to describe reaping sparingly and afterwards sowing abundantly. Both groups understood sowing a grain of wheat and afterward harvesting much fruit.

**How was Jesus glorified through His death, burial, and resurrection?  
How was this contrary to what people expected in the Messiah?**

---

---

### VERSES 25-26

Having presented the metaphor of planting a seed, Jesus moved to the application. When He spoke of someone loving or hating ***his life***, He was referring to a life dictated and governed by one's ego, whims, self-interests, and desires. ***This world*** did not refer to this planet that spins in space. Jesus used *world* to mean the realm in which all fallen creation lives. Rather than be confined to this fallen world, believers experience eternal life that is glorious beyond what anyone has seen, heard, or imagined (1 Cor. 2:9).

Verse 26 contains the promise of both risk and reward, of peril and prize. Jesus was nearing the cross; to ***follow*** Him at this point meant being willing to die a martyr's death. That death, though,

would be followed by the eternal rewards of being with Jesus and being honored by the Father.

**Why is it difficult to hate one's life in this world? How does losing one's life lead to gaining life?**

---

---

## **GLORIFIED** (JOHN 12:27-28)

**<sup>27</sup> Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.**

### **VERSES 27-28**

Jesus came as God in human flesh—as much human as if He were not divine and as much divine as if He were not human. Verse 27 is a reminder of that truth.

He had just announced the hour had arrived; His death was pending. In His lifetime Jesus had surely seen crucified bodies hanging on Roman crosses. He had witnessed the barbaric torture and resultant agony. Thus, for Jesus to say ***now is my soul troubled*** had to be an understatement.

The word *soul* referred to the core of a person's feelings and emotions. What Jesus felt was coming from deep within. The imagery behind the Greek word translated *troubled* was of something being disturbed. The same word described Herod's reaction to the wise men's announcement about the birth of the king of the Jews: "he was *troubled*" (Matt. 2:3, emphasis added). Jesus felt intense emotional distress because of what He was facing. Despite the anguish, however, this was why He came.

The words of verse 27 reflect the prayer of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39). The prayer reflects both the dread Jesus felt and His steadfastness in His obedience to the Father, understanding He was to be sacrificed for our sins (John 10:17-18; 1 John 4:10).

In the statement, ***Father, glorify thy name***, the Greek emphasizes the “thy.” It is reminiscent of the opening statement in the Lord’s Prayer, “hallowed be thy name” (Matt 6:9). The act of bringing glory to God had deep roots in the Old Testament. (See Ex. 15:11; Deut. 5:24; Ps. 19:1; Isa. 60:1-2.) Giving God glory had been a guiding principle throughout Christ’s ministry (John 1:14; 7:18; 8:29,50; 11:1-4). His humbling Himself by “becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross” would ultimately result in every knee bowing and every tongue confessing “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:8,11).

God spoke audibly in response to Jesus’s request. He promised He would ***glorify*** His name ***again***. Looking back on these events, believers see the Father brought glory to His name through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son. Jesus was not crucified because God was angry, dissatisfied, or disappointed with Jesus. The crucifixion was the means through which Jesus would seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

**How does the struggle Jesus faced help believers faithfully follow God?**

---

---

## **DRAWS** (JOHN 12:29-33)

<sup>29</sup> **The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.** <sup>30</sup> **Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.**

<sup>31</sup> **Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.** <sup>32</sup> **And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.** <sup>33</sup> **This he said, signifying what death he should die.**

### **VERSES 29-31**

John did not describe ***the people***. The crowd may have included some who had gone to Bethany to see Jesus and Lazarus (12:9) or some who had waved palm branches when Jesus entered Jerusalem (vv. 12-13). Some hearing God’s voice thought it sounded like thunder. Not knowing the source, some thought ***an angel*** had spoken.

Jesus knew He did not need to hear the audible voice of God to know the Father heard His prayer. The voice was for the benefit of others who heard it. They recognized that the brief prayer Jesus uttered had resulted in a divine response from the sky.

That thunderous response itself was a declaration that this was to be a pivotal and powerful moment. For Jesus, the crucial moment had arrived, and it was **now**.

Unlike the other Gospels, John does not include stories of Jesus delivering individuals from demons or evil spirits. Instead, John told of Jesus declaring that ***the prince of this world*** was to be **cast out**. Using exorcism language, Jesus was not referring to a demon or an evil spirit; He was speaking of Satan himself. The enemy was to be defeated—**now**.

### VERSES 32-33

How was the enemy going to be defeated? Jesus would be ***lifted up from the earth***. He had used similar terminology when alluding to the lifting of the bronze snake (3:14-15). Jesus was speaking about His crucifixion, ***what death he should die***.

In saying He would ***draw all men*** to Himself, Jesus was not teaching that all people would automatically or eventually be saved—even without coming to faith in Christ. Instead, Jesus was saying that God was calling *all* peoples to Him—Jews and Greeks, Romans and Gentiles, male and female, young and old, rich and poor. He came to be the Savior for all. (See John 1:12.)

**How does the death of Jesus on the cross produce judgment and victory?  
How does the cross draw people today?**

---

---

---

### KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation*

Salvation is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. (See Matthew 1:21; Ephesians 2:8-9.)





# *I Will Come Again*

Jesus is building a people that will honor God for eternity.

## **JOHN 13:31-14:6**

Whether it is a military deployment, business trip, or trip to the store, goodbyes can cause anxiety. We want to know when the person will be coming back. Somehow, knowing the exact projected time eases the anxiety and we can look forward to being reunited. Assurance of a return produces confidence to endure. We also should have confidence as we anticipate Jesus's return.

**How does knowing the time of a person's return from a trip, deployment, or errand ease anxiety?**

---

---

---

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## JOHN 13:1-14:6

The day before Jesus's crucifixion had arrived. He had told His disciples He would be put to death in Jerusalem. But as they gathered for their last Passover together, they argued over who would be greatest in Christ's kingdom (Luke 22:24-27). Jesus used a powerful object lesson to teach them humility and service.

Because travel took place on dusty roads, hosts typically offered water so guests could wash their feet. Sometimes servants performed this menial task, but in the upper room no one volunteered to assume that role. Jesus set aside His robe, took a towel, and washed the disciples' feet. At first, Peter resisted but yielded when Jesus said it was necessary. Jesus urged the Twelve to follow His example and serve others.

During the meal, Jesus referred to the presence of one who would betray Him. Quoting Psalm 41:9, He said someone who shared His food would lift his heel against Him. He identified the traitor by dipping bread in the sauce and giving it to Judas.

As Jesus prepared the remaining disciples for His death, He commanded them to love one another as He loved them. This section begins what some scholars call the Farewell Discourse. Responding to their confusion over His remarks, Jesus told them they could not go with Him yet. Peter declared his willingness to go with Jesus anywhere and even to die for Him. Jesus knew Peter's heart but predicted he would deny his Master before daybreak. Naturally, the disciples were troubled at His sayings. Jesus encouraged them to believe in Him. He promised to return and gather them to Himself. Thomas questioned where Jesus was going and how they could get there. Jesus pointed to Himself as the only way to the Father.

**As you read through John 13:31-14:6, look for examples of the disciples not understanding what Jesus was saying. How do you think their understanding changed when they looked back on these events months and even years later?**

---

---

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## HONOR THROUGH LOVE (JOHN 13:31-35)

<sup>31</sup> Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. <sup>33</sup> Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. <sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

### VERSES 31-32

At the time of Judas's departure, John—speaking both literally and figuratively—ominously declared, “and it was night” (13:30). Once Judas left, Jesus addressed the Eleven. He returned to a theme He introduced earlier, His being *glorified* (12:23). The time had arrived; it was *now*. Shockingly, glorification would come through crucifixion.

Crucifixion in the first century was the most demeaning and shameful form of capital punishment. Yet Jesus saw the cross as the means for revealing God's glory. His crucifixion would destroy the power of Satan and his hold on sinners (Rom. 6:6; 1 John 3:8). Rather than it be a moment of shame, the crucifixion would *glorify* the Father and reveal the *Son of man* in His glory. Through Jesus's pending crucifixion, *God* would be *glorified in him*. The crucifixion would be the ultimate display of God's merciful love for sinners.

### VERSES 33-35

When Jesus had been at the Feast of Tabernacles some six months earlier, religious leaders tried to have Him arrested. What He said to them then He repeated almost word-for-word to the disciples in the upper room. Both groups would *seek* Him but not find Him (John 7:34; 13:33). The difference was the religious leaders would look for Jesus because they wanted to kill Him—the disciples would look for Him because they would miss Him and long for the intimate friendship they had shared.

The farewell address of Jesus included **a new commandment**: His followers are to **love one another . . . as** he had **loved** them. This begs the question: How had Jesus loved them? John 13:1 says Jesus “loved them unto the end.” The word “end” does not mean to the conclusion of their time together. It means that Jesus loved His disciples to the fullest measure or to the uttermost. He had demonstrated that kind of love in the most unexpected manner by washing the disciples’ feet—something only a servant would do. Jesus was demonstrating selfless love, the kind His followers were (and are) to put into action.

What a contrast this selfless love would be in a world filled with self-focused people who operate out of self-serving and self-aggrandizing motives. To practice this selfless kind of love would give evidence that a person was indeed one of His disciples.

**How does love for others define a follower of Jesus?**

---

---

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Notice repeated words or phrases in a Bible passage.*

Consider how many times the terms *glorify* or *glorified* occur in John 13:31-32. Use a Bible dictionary or similar resource to determine the difference between *glory* and *glorify*. How does glory reflect God’s essential character? List some ways Christ’s death, resurrection, and second coming glorify Jesus and God the Father.

---

---

---

## **HONOR THROUGH LOYALTY (JOHN 13:36-38)**

**<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now;**

**but thou shalt follow me afterwards.** <sup>37</sup> **Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.** <sup>38</sup> **Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.**

### VERSES 36-38

Throughout His ministry, Jesus had said He was going to leave. He announced at the Festival of Tabernacles, “Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me” (John 7:33). Ignoring what Jesus had said about the disciples loving one another, Peter returned to the topic of Jesus leaving. He asked Jesus two questions. His first, ***whither goest thou?*** showed either that the disciples still did not understand what Jesus was facing or that Peter was unwilling to accept that Jesus was going away. Either way, Peter could not reconcile the thought of Jesus leaving with His recently being declared by the crowds to be “the King of Israel” (12:13).

Jesus explained that Peter would not be going there now but would follow Him there later. This prediction was similar to what Jesus said when Peter protested at the thought of Jesus washing his feet: “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter” (13:7).

Peter’s second question, ***why cannot I follow thee now?*** indicated he truly wanted to be with Jesus, regardless of the personal cost. How intensely Peter desired to be with Jesus is revealed in his rash yet sincere declaration: ***I will lay down my life for thy sake.***

All four Gospels tell of Peter’s declaration of loyalty. Matthew recorded it as, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Matt. 26:33). Luke stated, “Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death” (Luke 22:33). Mark said the other disciples felt the same way: “But he [Peter] spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all” (Mark 14:31).

Unswayed by Peter’s declaration, Jesus asked, ***Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?*** This question indicated Peter did not yet grasp who was laying down whose life for whom. It would be Jesus who would willingly lay down His life for others (John 10:11,17-18).

The Lord's saying, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee**, emphasizes the gravity and reliability of what He was about to say. Jesus declared Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed.

Peter must have been shocked by what Jesus said. Simon Peter, the rash disciple who was normally full of zeal and passion, evidently did not utter another word as the disciples were in the upper room. We do not see anything else concerning Peter until Gethsemane when he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (18:10).

**How might a person's good intentions get derailed? How can believers honor Jesus through their loyalty?**

---

---

## HONOR THROUGH BELIEVING (JOHN 14:1-6)

**<sup>1</sup> Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. <sup>4</sup> And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. <sup>5</sup> Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? <sup>6</sup> Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

### VERSES 1-3

Jesus turned His attention to the disciples as a group. He knew they were **troubled**. The Greek word translated *troubled* carries the idea of being stirred or agitated. It is the same word John used to describe the waters at the pool of Bethesda. There, the lame man said to Jesus, "I have no man, when the water is *troubled*" (5:7, emphasis added). Jesus knew what it was to have a troubled heart. He had felt troubled when He approached Lazarus's tomb. Additionally, His heart had been troubled when He spoke of His pending death and when He had told the disciples that one of them would betray Him (11:33; 12:27; 13:21).

Interestingly, Jesus used terms that disagreed in number. **Your** is plural and **heart** is singular. This was not a mistake. At this point the

disciples were operating in complete unity. They all had been confused and uncertain about what Jesus had been telling them—and by what Jesus had just said to Peter. If he would deny Jesus, what hope did they have of remaining faithful?

The remedy for their troubled heart was trust. Jesus instructed them to trust the Creator and His Son. While the word **believe** is identical in both phrases, the first instance should be read as a statement, while the second is clearly a command.

Jesus taught and demonstrated His oneness with the Father. He was absolutely in harmony with the One who sent Him. If the disciples trusted the Father in other areas of life, they should trust Jesus in the matter of His messianic mission. Nothing would happen that He and the Father did not allow. Jesus had the power to lay down His life and to take it up again (10:18).

Jesus began to explain that the disciples' separation from Him would be temporary. The **Father's house** referred to heaven. The practice of first-century Jewish families called for a son to add onto his father's house a place where he and his bride would live permanently after the wedding (see John 8:35). Over time, the house might contain **many** separate housing units around a courtyard that the extended family shared.

For the ultra-wealthy, these shared family units were palatial dwellings with multiple levels, terraces, fountains, and gardens. Herod built these type houses for himself in Jerusalem, Caesarea, Tiberias, and Jericho. Knowing His disciples had seen these royal villas, Jesus was saying the place He would prepare for them would exceed anything that even the wealthiest of their day enjoyed.

Jesus previously stated He was going away. Now He promised He would **come again**—to take His disciples home with Him. What a promise! It is the picture of the bridegroom, having made all the necessary arrangements at his father's house, going to collect his bride so he might take her home to live permanently with him.

**How does the promise of a place in heaven motivate a person to remain loyal to Christ?**

---

---

## VERSES 4-6

Thomas, reacting to what Jesus said, stated: ***Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?*** His use of the plural *we* indicated the other disciples had the same unanswered questions.

Jesus responded by declaring He alone is ***the way, the truth, and the life***. Jesus is not merely one *way* among many ways to God. He stated plainly, ***no man cometh unto the Father, but by me***. If it were possible to have peace with God in any other way, Jesus would not have to die. He had to go away—die—to prepare a path and a place.

Jesus is also *the truth*. We should not be tricked by humanistic pluralism that contends we must accept all religions, thoughts, and philosophies as equally valid to be inclusive of all people. The path to the Father exclusively goes through Jesus.

Finally, Jesus is *the life*. He is not merely the way to life; Jesus is the life. Paul reminded believers that Christ is our life (Col. 3:3-4). To have Christ is to have life. He possesses the power to grant eternal life to everyone who believes in Him (John 5:26; 17:2). Jesus's purpose in going away by way of the cross made it possible for believers to receive eternal life through Him.

Through the centuries, followers of Christ have found assurance in His declaration. In fact, this claim of exclusivity was so embraced by early believers that people referred to Christianity as “the way” (Acts 9:2; 24:14). We rejoice because He is the way to the Father.

**How does Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life define why a person must believe in Jesus alone for salvation?**

---

---

---

### **KEY DOCTRINE:** *Last Things*

According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Hebrews 9:27-28.)





# *Peace I Leave*

Jesus offers peace to those who trust in Him.

## JOHN 14:16-29

The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary became the catalyst that led to the outbreak of World War I. H. G. Wells dubbed it “The War to End All Wars.” It ended with the signing of an armistice agreement on November 11, 1918. The end of the war, though, did not usher in a lasting peace. What we really need is a peace that is only available through Jesus. He offers a peace that surpasses human understanding.

**How do you define peace? What’s the difference between peace and a lack of conflict?**

---

---

# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **JOHN 14:7-31**

Perfect peace finds its ultimate expression in the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—one God in three persons. During the Last Supper, Jesus’s disciples were wrestling with the reality of His imminent departure from this world when He re-introduced them to the concept of the Trinity, though He did not use that term. The perfect harmony found within the Godhead provides a basis for and an example of believers’ peace.

Philip asked Jesus to reveal the Father. Jesus gently rebuked His disciple and reminded Philip that He and the Father were one. Jesus’s words and deeds were in complete agreement with the Father. The Son and the Father experience no separation in essence, purpose, or being. Even the disciples’ prayers should be directed toward the Father but offered in Jesus’s name. God’s answers to prayer glorified Himself in the Son.

Later, speaking about the Holy Spirit, Jesus assured the group He would send a Comforter who would be like Himself. The Spirit had been with believers and would reside within them. Jesus referred to the third person of the Trinity as the Spirit of Truth. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ to believers.

When Jesus departed the world, His disciples would not be alone but would experience the Spirit’s presence forever. The concepts Jesus taught were difficult for them to understand, but the Spirit would make everything clear. The primary way He reveals truth is through God’s Word. The Spirit inspired biblical writers and illuminates Scriptures as believers read them today.

Although the disciples were troubled and confused, Jesus offered them perfect peace. His peace was different than what the world could give them. We can be at peace regardless of what the world might throw at us.

**As you read John 14:16-29, mark promises made by Jesus. How do the promises define the benefits of following Him?**

---

---

# EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

## **THE COUNSELOR** (JOHN 14:16-21)

<sup>16</sup> And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; <sup>17</sup> Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. <sup>18</sup> I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. <sup>20</sup> At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

### **VERSES 16-18**

The Greek verb translated *pray* (ask) is not the term for a subordinate making a request of a superior. Instead, people used this verb when making a request of an equal—someone with whom the requester had a personal relationship. In this case, Jesus promised to ask His Father.

Jesus promised that the Father would send ***another Comforter***. The word *another* means another of the same kind. Jesus was saying, “He will be exactly like me.” The Greek word translated *Comforter* referred to one who had been called alongside another. The picture is one who stands with His arm draped across the shoulder of someone who needs help, guidance, strength, support, or encouragement. The Greek word could also refer to a legal assistant or advocate who helped someone in court.

***The Holy Spirit does not teach anything that contradicts what Jesus taught.***

The promise was that this One who would stand alongside the disciples would ***abide with you*** (plural) ***for ever***. None of the disciples would be excluded from the comforting and strengthening presence of the Holy Spirit who would never leave them.

Jesus described the Comforter whom the Father would send. The Comforter is ***the Spirit of truth***; that is, He is the One who would

teach the truth and reveal spiritual truths to believers. The Holy Spirit does not teach anything that contradicts what Jesus taught.

Just as the world did not receive Jesus (1:10), it would not **receive**, **seeth**, or **knoweth** this Comforter. Those who are not Christ's disciples would not receive this *Spirit of truth*. (See 1 Cor. 2:14.)

Those who are Christ's followers, though, would know this Spirit of truth because the Spirit would remain, meaning to abide, both **with you** and **in you**, meaning the disciples. The Spirit's presence meant Jesus was not abandoning His disciples like they were orphans. The Spirit would come to them, a promise fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2).

Again, each usage of *you* in these verses is plural. So just as Jesus had been with the group and in the group, so the Holy Spirit would abide both with and in the community of the faithful after Jesus ascended (John 16:7).

### How do believers know that the Holy Spirit lives within them?

---

---

#### VERSES 19-21

Jesus spoke of **a little while**, knowing He was hours from His crucifixion. In saying **the world seeth me no more**, Jesus was not saying that He would remain in the tomb, unseen. When He said, **but ye see me**, He was referring to His post-resurrection appearances to His disciples (see 1 Cor. 15:5-8).

The second promise, **because I live, ye shall live also**, addressed the age-old question: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). The answer is, "Yes, death does not have the final word." Death's victory and sting were obliterated at the empty tomb (1 Cor. 15:55).

The third promise was that the resurrection would verify Jesus is in the Father, His disciples are in Him, and He is in them. Jesus previously said He was in the Father and the Father was in Him (John 14:10,11). The phrase **ye in me, and I in you** was new, something the disciples had not heard before. Jesus was saying that not even death could break the union He had with His disciples, a union not unlike what He enjoyed with the Father.

Jesus then returned to an earlier theme, that of loving Him and keeping His commands (see 14:15). His followers do not keep His commands to earn His love but because they already love Him.

---

### **KEY DOCTRINE:** *God the Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit's presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. (See Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 1:13-14.)

## **THE TEACHER** (JOHN 14:22-26)

**<sup>22</sup> Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. <sup>24</sup> He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. <sup>25</sup> These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.**

### **VERSES 22-26**

Some have identified ***Judas . . . not Iscariot*** as possibly being Thaddaeus (Matt. 10:3). Regardless, his question revealed he still believed Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom. Judas did not understand how Jesus could do that if He was revealing Himself to the disciples but ***not unto the world***. Jews of the day were expecting a Messiah to step forward, free the Jews from Roman oppression, and reestablish Israel politically and militarily as it had been in the days of King David. How could Jesus do that without revealing Himself to everyone?

Jesus patiently responded to Judas's question. His kingdom had nothing to do with military might or political influence. His kingdom would consist of those who love Him and keep His word. For the

followers who live out that kingdom principle, both Jesus and the Father will make their home with that believer. Jesus was doubtlessly talking about the Father and the Son being present with the believer in the person of the Holy Spirit.

In contrast to the one who loves Jesus, the one who doesn't will not keep or obey His words. The motivation for obeying His words was that the words had come from **the Father** who had sent Him, a principle already stated in John's Gospel (7:16; 8:28; 12:49-50).

Jesus, addressing the entire group of disciples and alluding to His soon departure, explained He had **spoken** these things while still with them. This was an indication He was coming to the end of His teaching ministry. The Holy Spirit, though, would continue to teach them and remind them of what Jesus had said. Significantly, the word **you** in verse 26 is singular. Jesus was saying that the Holy Spirit would work individually in the life of each disciple.

Jesus made an important clarification about the coming of the Holy Spirit. Earlier in His ministry, He had explained that the Father had sent Him to do the Father's will and to teach His words (6:38-40; 7:16; 12:44-49). At this point, Jesus explained the Father would be sending the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus. Jesus had come representing the Father on the earth; the Spirit would be coming and representing Jesus on the earth. Jesus would later state He was sending His disciples, which meant they would be His representatives in the world (20:21). Jesus was both a sender and one who had been sent.

**How does understanding a truth move a person to act on that truth? Why do some people struggle with obeying God's Word?**

---

---

## **THE PEACE** (JOHN 14:27-29)

**<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. <sup>28</sup> Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> And**

**now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.**

### VERSE 27

As He did in verse 26, Jesus again used the singular form of the pronoun **you**. Doing so, He promised His disciples they would each experience a sense of **peace** unlike anything the world could offer. The world often defines *peace* as the absence of conflict. This, though, was not what Jesus was promising. Jesus told His disciples they would be facing persecution, hatred, threats of death, and even martyrdom (Matt. 24:9; Luke 21:12; John 15:20; 16:2). The peace Jesus promised did not mean the disciples would not face conflicts or challenges.

The peace Jesus was promising would abide in each disciple's **heart**, meaning the seat of each person's emotions. The disciples would thus have an inner tranquility, even when experiencing threats and adversity. The disciples' **troubled** hearts should be calmed by Jesus's promise of the Holy Spirit and His indwelling.

### VERSES 28-29

In these verses, Jesus returned to the plural form of **you**. He reminded the disciples that He had previously told them He was going away (see John 7:33; 8:21; 13:33,36; 14:2-4,12,18-19,23). In some of these instances, Jesus also said He would be returning, that is, coming again to them.

Then, with a sense of reprimand, He stated the disciples should have rejoiced because He was going to the Father. Their lack of doing so indicated they were more concerned about their own loss because He was leaving, that is, dying, than they were with what Jesus would gain by doing so. Jesus saw His death as His opportunity to return to the right hand of the Father and to assume the full glory He had before the world began, and before He laid that glory aside to come to earth (17:5,24; Phil. 2:5-8).

In saying **my Father is greater than I**, Jesus was not contradicting what He had said during His ministry, that He is equal with God (John 5:17-18; 10:30; 14:9). Rather, He was highlighting the submissive status He assumed while on earth. This echoed what He had earlier said—He had come to earth to do what the Father had sent Him to do and to speak the words the Father had given Him (6:39; 12:49).

Again, wanting to remove the disciples' feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, Jesus explained that His words were intended to help strengthen their faith in the future. More than once, Jesus spoke of future events, knowing that when they were fulfilled, the disciples would, in light of then-current happenings, remember what He had said and recognize the significance of what He had said (2:19-22; 16:1-4). Verse 29 is almost identical to what Jesus had said earlier when speaking of Judas's betrayal: "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he" (13:19).

Jesus's words in verse 29 spotlighted His concern for the disciples' faith. Jesus wanted to make sure they had peace in the moment and that, as they faced challenges in the future, their strong faith would continue to give them that sense of abiding peace.

### **How can a person demonstrate love for Jesus today?**

---

---

---

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Compare passages to gain a clear understanding.*

Compare John 14:27 to Matthew 10:34-39. How do you reconcile these statements? Reflect on how loving Jesus relates to receiving Jesus's peace (John 14:27) and the conflict believers may experience with unbelievers. Write a prayer expressing your love for Christ and asking Him to manifest His peace in your life.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





# *Remain in Me*

Jesus is the source of life and spiritual growth.

## **JOHN 15:1-17**

Many people have interest in researching their family history. Websites, articles, heirlooms, books, genetic tests, and repeated family stories add to our understanding of our family history. Piecing together our family stories can help us understand why our family does some of the things it does, help us connect as a family, and give us identity. Jesus called on His disciples to connect to Him and His purposes. In doing so, they would find their identity.

**What is one interesting thing you know about your family heritage?  
How does that fact impact your family's identity?**

---

---

# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **JOHN 15:1-25**

As Jesus continued His discourse after the Passover supper, He taught the disciples the importance of remaining in Him. Using the picture of a grapevine, Jesus employed a common experience from Jewish life. The disciples understood the processes related to raising and harvesting grapes. Clusters of grapes grew on small branches connected to the larger vine. If a branch withered and failed to produce fruit, the gardener removed it, so it did not hinder the rest of the grapevine. He then pruned the vine so new growth would produce even more grapes. With this analogy, Jesus emphasized the necessity for the disciples not only to set up their lives within Him, but also for them to be fruitful spiritually as a result. Doing so glorifies the Father.

One aspect of abiding in Christ involves love for Him and for one another. When believers abide in Christ, His love naturally produces reciprocal love for Him. We demonstrate our love for Him by loving one another. Another characteristic of remaining in Christ is to abide in His word. Genuine love for Jesus can be observed by obedience to His commands. Knowing He loves us, we follow His words because they are good and are intended for our good. Joy results from a loving obedience to Christ. We cannot keep Jesus's commands if we do not know or understand them.

People who abide in Christ should be ready for opposition. Those who reject Jesus not only resist Him, but also hate everyone associated with Him. They do not accept His words or acknowledge His works. Refusing God's love in the gift of His Son, these adversaries turn their animosity toward those who follow Christ. Believers should count themselves blessed to suffer with their Lord so the Father may be glorified in them.

**Read John 15:1-17 in your Bible and chart how Jesus is connected to the Father and the disciples to Jesus. How do these connections instill confidence in the disciples?**

---

---

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## PRUNED (JOHN 15:1-8)

<sup>1</sup> I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. <sup>7</sup> If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. <sup>8</sup> Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

### VERSES 1-3

The Old Testament referred to Israel as a vine God planted: “I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed” (Jer. 2:21). Best known for this analogy in the Old Testament are probably the “songs of the vineyard” in Isaiah 5:1-7 and 27:2-6. These speak of God’s love for His vineyard (Israel) and His judgment when the vineyard fails to produce good fruit. The Isaiah 5 passage is the backdrop for today’s study.

Jesus referred to Himself as the **true vine**, which stood in stark contrast to the fruitlessness of Old Testament Israel. The Father was the **husbandman** or the gardener. Everything that was produced thus depended on God.

Verse 2 outlines the Father’s role as gardener. Removing unfruitful portions of the vine and pruning it were essential tasks in vineyard husbandry—the entire purpose of the vine is to produce fruit. Left untended, the vine will produce a lot of unfruitful growth, which the Master Gardener prunes. We should be careful not to misinterpret what Jesus was saying. He was not talking about a true believer being cut off from the kingdom. The emphasis is on God performing the work necessary to **bring forth more fruit**.

The disciples were *clean*, meaning the pruning had already been done in them. This cleaning occurred as they had absorbed what Jesus taught in their years together.

### How does the Father prune us so that we can be more fruitful?

---

---

---

---

---

#### **BIBLE SKILL:** *Compare uses of the same word.*

Use a Bible concordance to identify other instances of the use of the word translated “abide” or “remain” (Greek word *meno*) in John’s Gospel (such as John 1:38-39; 8:31; 11:6; 14:10,17). How does the use of this word in these other passages help you gain a clearer understanding of what Jesus was teaching in John 15?

---

---

---

#### **VERSES 4-5**

At this point, Jesus introduced the focus of His teaching, the necessity of abiding, or as some translations have it, “remaining,” in Him. The verb *abide* in verse 4 is an imperative and emphasizes being constantly present.

Having identified His role and the Father’s as the vine and the gardener, Jesus clarified the disciples’ role—they were the branches. He also spoke of a reciprocal relationship; He remains in His disciples and His disciples remain in Him. The outcome of this relationship is that the *branch* will *bear fruit*. Apart from that shared connection, disciples *can do nothing*, meaning they can produce no fruit.

The opposite is also true. Not abiding, not remaining in Him, or not staying connected results in a nonproductive vine. Without the connection and steady supply of nourishment, the vine produces no

fruit and eventually withers (v. 6). For believers, this is a reminder of the necessity of regular Bible study, prayer, and discipleship. Without these a follower of Christ cannot thrive spiritually.

---

### **KEY DOCTRINE: *Sanctification***

Sanctification is enabling of the believer to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. (See Romans 8:15-18; 1 Corinthians 2:12.)

### **VERSES 6-8**

These three verses contrast those who remain or abide in Christ with those who do not. Those who do not abide, those not connected, face judgment. The external evidence of their being disconnected is fruitlessness. Jesus described the judgment; they are **cast forth . . . into the fire** and **burned**. Although verse 6 does not say so specifically, these tasks fall to the gardener or vinedresser.

In speaking of the unfruitful, Jesus was not talking about believers who have periods of unfruitfulness in their Christian walk; this can happen to any believer. Instead, Jesus was referring to persons who have never been believers but who still appear among the faithful. These are, as Jesus said in another parable, tares that sprout up alongside the wheat (Matt. 13:24-30). Among the Twelve, Judas would serve as an example of someone with all the outward appearances of being faithful; yet Jesus referred to him as “lost” and “the son of perdition” (John 17:12).

Verse 7 provides the contrast to verse 6. Those who abide in Christ and adhere to His teaching ultimately grow in their Christlikeness. These faithful believers experience answered prayers as their requests are in keeping with God’s will and in accordance with the character of Christ (see 14:14).

Believers are being pruned by God so we can be more fruitful. God’s love for us involves not only producing spiritual fruit as we abide in Christ, but sometimes it also requires cutting away to enhance future growth.

## JOY (JOHN 15:9-11)

**<sup>9</sup> As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. <sup>10</sup> If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.**

### VERSES 9-11

Jesus gave His disciples an example of what abiding or remaining was to look like. He Himself had modeled the ultimate pattern for abiding. To highlight this, Jesus reminded the disciples of His relationship with His Father, a relationship marked by love and obedience.

Remaining in Jesus and His love is lived out by being obedient to what Jesus taught. This obedience is the external evidence of the internal love relationship we have with Christ. Jesus modeled this obedience by keeping His ***Father's commandments***. We don't obey so He will love us. We obey Him because we love Him who first loved us (1 John 4:19).

The reward and capstone of living in this loving and intimate fellowship with Jesus is joy—His joy. For Jesus to speak of ***my joy*** when He was just hours from the cross may seem illogical. Having joy at such a moment emphasizes that such joy is possible only when one is being obedient to God—not because one is having blissful experiences. The joy Jesus experienced and that He offers is unquenchable, even in the face of pain. Disobedience, though, blocks this joy, as David found out (see Ps. 51:12).

The word ***full*** carries the idea of being fulfilled and satisfied to the maximum amount. Jesus later prayed His disciples would “have my joy fulfilled in themselves” (John 17:13). Simon Peter described this as “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8). Such joy is the crowing reward for living in loving obedience to Christ.

**How does a person's obedience to Jesus produce joy? What substitutes does the world offer and how do they compare to the joy produced by obedience to Jesus?**

---

---

## LOVE (JOHN 15:12-17)

<sup>12</sup> **This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.** <sup>13</sup> **Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.** <sup>14</sup> **Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.** <sup>15</sup> **Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.** <sup>16</sup> **Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.** <sup>17</sup> **These things I command you, that ye love one another.**

### VERSE 12

Jesus again turned His focus to the disciples loving one another (13:34). This command, ***love one another***, is stated in verses 12 and 17, thus framing the teaching of Jesus in these verses. The repetition underscored how essential this loving relationship was for the disciples in this moment and how crucial it was going to be as they faced future challenges and persecution. Jesus had modeled for the disciples the type of love they were to have for one another, love characterized by steadfast devotion and self-sacrifice.

### VERSES 13-16

Jesus had earlier said no one would take His life from Him; He would lay it down on His own (10:18). The time was near for that to happen. He would soon endure the ultimate expression of self-sacrifice; He would ***lay down his life for his friends***.

Looking to the Old Testament, many uphold David and Jonathan's relationship as the epitome of friendship. Three times Scripture defines Jonathan's affection for David: Jonathan "loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1,3; 20:17); David referred to Jonathan as "my brother," although the two were not biologically related (2 Sam. 1:26); and Jonathan risked his life to defend David (1 Sam. 20:24-42).

Concerning His friends, Jesus said they were to love selflessly. John later wrote: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

Second, they were to obey what Jesus commanded. Obedience is the natural outcome of a genuine salvation experience with Christ (John 8:31). His sheep hear His voice and follow Him (10:27).

Third, friends of Jesus receive what He teaches—truth He **heard** from His **Father**. This knowledge is part of what separates friends from servants. Whereas servants in the first century were obligated to do strictly what they had been told, friends shared a different relationship. Jesus wanted His friends to be “in the know” about what God is like, what He was doing, and what He wanted the disciples to do. This understanding is not available to nonbelievers (see Matt. 13:10-11). The Spirit would continue to teach the disciples after Jesus returned to the Father (John 14:25-26).

Fourth, Jesus’s friends have heard Him call, “Come, follow me.” He has commissioned them to **bring forth fruit**. His saying **ye have not chosen me** spotlights the fact that salvation is God’s initiative (Eph. 2:8-9).

Jesus did not make the statement **I have chosen you** while Judas was still present. Before Judas exited, Jesus had said, “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen” (John 13:18). Now, speaking to the Eleven, Jesus said He had **ordained** them to **go** and produce fruit that would **remain**. To **go** carried the idea of fulfilling the Great Commission—to go into all the world and make disciples. **Remain** is the same Greek verb used in verses 4-7. Christ’s disciples remain in Him, His words remain in them, and they produce fruit that remains. Producing fruit that remains comes because Christ’s followers **ask of the Father in His name**. This establishes the vital link between prayer, evangelism, and disciple-making.

## VERSE 17

Jesus again repeated His new **command**. The connection that begins with the Father progresses to the Son, continues from the Son to the disciples, and concludes with the disciples being linked to one another. Although we are not related genetically, we are family because of the blood of Jesus.

**How does a friendship with Jesus lead to abiding fruit in a person’s life?**

---





# *I Have Seen*

Jesus is the resurrected Savior.

## JOHN 20:1-18

When our mother uses our first name, we usually stop in our tracks. We know better than to ignore that call. The same thing is true when our boss uses our first name, especially if they're doing so to congratulate or recognize our work. Hearing our first name changes the relationship. When Mary heard her name called by the One she thought to be the gardener—it changed everything.

**How does using first names in a business setting impact interactions between people with different roles?**

---

---

---

# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **JOHN 20:1-18**

Skeptics who mock divine creation and divine incarnation also discredit the resurrection of Jesus. Their problem lies in the implication of the resurrection. If Jesus died and rose again, He was exactly who He claimed to be—God the Son, the Messiah, the Savior.

Scripture gives solid evidence for Jesus's resurrection. If the first witnesses of Christ's resurrection were trying to prove preconceived ideas, one might legitimately question their accounts. However, Mary, Peter, and John were not expecting to find an empty tomb. Mary went to the tomb early in the morning of the third day after Jesus's crucifixion. Other Gospel accounts relate that she went with several women to anoint Jesus's dead body with spices appropriate for burial (Mark 16:1). They even worried about how they could get past the stone and guards that stood between them and their Lord's body. When Mary found the tomb vacated, she ran to tell the disciples what she had seen. The other women also recounted their experience (Luke 24:1-10).

Most of the disciples remained in hiding for fear of the Jews. They didn't believe the women and discounted their report as idle tales (Luke 24:11). Peter and John ran to the tomb to see what happened. John arrived first but was hesitant to enter the tomb. Peter did not wait but immediately went inside. Even when looking into the open grave, they did not fully understand what they saw.

Mary must have followed the two disciples since she remained by the tomb after they went back to Jerusalem. Two angels questioned her about her crying. She thought someone had stolen Jesus's body. Only when Mary encountered the living Christ did she finally realize that He had risen from the dead. Returning to the disciples, she had exciting news. No longer did she merely report seeing an empty tomb; she had met the risen Lord!

**As you read John 20:1-18, look for moments of faith. What role did faith play in the responses of the people in this account?**

---

---

# EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

## **EXAMINE** (JOHN 20:1-10)

<sup>1</sup> The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. <sup>2</sup> Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. <sup>3</sup> Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. <sup>4</sup> So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. <sup>5</sup> And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. <sup>6</sup> Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, <sup>7</sup> And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. <sup>9</sup> For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

## **VERSES 1-4**

Although the other Gospel writers stated that other women also came to the tomb that morning, John focused on **•Mary Magdalene** (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:1). Only John states it was **yet dark** when she came to the tomb. Together, these accounts paint a picture of the women leaving Jerusalem together; *Mary Magdalene*, though, evidently moved faster and arrived first. When Mary arrived, she saw **the stone** had been rolled away.

Despite popular misconceptions, Scripture gives no indication that Mary Magdalene had ever been a prostitute. Luke 7 tells of a prostitute who washed the feet of Jesus with her hair; chapter 8 separately introduces Mary Magdalene (v. 2). Martha's sister, Mary, later anointed the Lord's feet with perfume (John 12:1-8). Although the stories describe different events that occurred at separate occasions, people have merged them together.

We know several things about Mary Magdalene. First, she was from Magdala, a fishing village on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Recent archaeological finds indicate Magdala had a large and faithful Jewish population. Second, Jesus exorcised seven demons from her (Luke 8:2). Third, she became a faithful follower of Jesus. Fourth, she was present at the crucifixion. Fifth, she saw where Jesus was buried (Mark 15:40,47).

Seeing the removed stone, Mary's first thought was someone had taken the Lord's body. Tomb robbery was such a problem that Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54) issued a decree of capital punishment for anyone who robbed a tomb or stole a body. Upon hearing about the empty tomb, chief priests instructed the soldiers who guarded the tomb to report that the disciples had stolen the body (Matt. 28:11-15).

Mary ran to find **Simon Peter** and John, the one **whom Jesus loved**. Mary's running was not surprising. John's readers would be amazed, however, by the men running, since men in first-century culture almost never ran. (See Luke 15:20.) The Book of Revelation uses the same Greek word to describe horses running or rushing into battle (Rev. 9:9). Mary Magdalene, and later *Simon Peter* and John, did some vigorous running. Although John **did outrun Peter** and arrived at the tomb first, he waited outside.

### How can we help others investigate the truth of the resurrection?

---

---

#### VERSES 5-10

John stooped down and looked inside the tomb without entering. Peter, true to his impetuous nature, arrived and entered immediately. The fact the grave clothes were still in the tomb indicated there had been no robbery. A robber would not have taken the time nor gone to the effort of unwrapping the body and folding pieces of cloth. Additionally, funerary cloth and spices would have been expensive. If the grave had been robbed, those items would have been stolen.

After Peter arrived and entered the tomb, John **went in also**. The fact that two men had seen the tomb empty would render their testimony as reliable and legally admissible (Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

Writing decades after the events of that Easter morning, John explained that when he went in the tomb and **saw** the funeral wrappings, he **believed**. What, though, did he believe? These burial wrappings convinced John that Jesus had been raised from the dead—He was resurrected. Only later did John and Peter understand the fuller meaning of Old Testament **scripture** that spoke of the Messiah’s resurrection (maybe Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:10-12).

Peter and John **went away again unto their own home**. Luke’s Gospel says of Peter, he “departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass” (Luke 24:12).

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Create a compare/contrast chart to study a passage.*

Create a two-column chart to compare the experience of Peter and John with that of Mary. Analyze John 20:1-18 and record your ideas about how they approached the empty tomb, noting these elements: motivations, expectations, emotions expressed, and reactions.

---

---

---

---

**QUESTIONS** (JOHN 20:11-13)

**<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, <sup>12</sup> And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. <sup>13</sup> And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.**

**VERSES 11-13**

Mary evidently remained outside the tomb as Peter and John entered. Or maybe she arrived while they were inside or even after they had

left. If she arrived while they were still there, what might they have said to her? Did they describe the placement of the linen cloths? Did they share their impressions with her? Scripture does not say.

Questions had to be swirling through Mary's mind. What had happened before she first arrived at the tomb? Who would have moved the stone? Had someone stolen the body? Had the guards not seen what had happened? Would the Jews look for someone to accuse? Where was the body? What should she do next?

Overcome with pain, grief, and confusion, Mary wept. Four times these verses state Mary wept (vv. 11,13,15). She was not silently weeping; the Greek term described wailing because of profound loss or anguish. Perhaps for the first time, ***she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre.***

Mary saw ***two angels in white.*** John described them as sitting at either end of the burial stone on which the Lord's body had been lying. The angels' presence meant God's holy and powerful presence had enveloped the site. Each Gospel account mentions the angels' clothing (Matt. 28:2-3; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4). Shimmering *white* garments signified these visitors had come from heavenly realms.

That Mary did not recognize the beings as angels indicates they had taken human form (Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4). This was not uncommon. The prophet Daniel reported that while he was praying, "*the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning . . . touched me*" (Dan. 9:21, emphasis added).

The angels asked Mary why she was crying. The question was likely a gentle rebuke. Mary, though, was still thinking the same thing she had conveyed to the disciples earlier—someone had ***taken away*** the body of Jesus and she did not know where the body was. Nothing she had seen or experienced had altered her thinking . . . yet.

**What questions and preconceived beliefs get in the way of believing the resurrection?**

---

---

## **WITNESS** (JOHN 20:14-18)

**<sup>14</sup> And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus saith**

unto her, Woman, why weapest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. <sup>16</sup> Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. <sup>17</sup> Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

### VERSES 14-15

When Mary turned around, she did not recognize Jesus. Still in the emotional fog of the morning, she looked through tear-filled eyes. Additionally, she was not expecting to see Jesus alive. She had last seen Him as a corpse that had been beaten, bruised, bloodied, and bound in grave linens.

Jesus asked Mary two questions. The first was identical to the angels' (v. 13). The second, though, directed Mary's attention away from herself and onto Him. Mary supposed the One speaking to her was **the gardener**. Seeing a gardener this early would not be unexpected. Any grave robbers would have already fled, and mourners would come later in the day.

She returned to her earlier concern about the body's location. Mary had come with the intention of properly preparing the body for burial; she was committed to fulfill that task.

***That Jesus first appeared and identified Himself to a woman was significant.***

### VERSES 16-18

Jesus called Mary by name. In that instant, everything changed. Astonishment replaced anguish, delight replaced despair, and hope replaced heartache. He spoke one word, **Mary**. She responded with one word, **Rabboni**, which translates affectionately as "my Teacher."

That Jesus first appeared and identified Himself to a woman was significant. Women in the first century were not allowed to testify in legal matters. Their testimony was considered unreliable. What Jesus

did in this moment was both significant and in keeping with what He had done throughout His ministry.

For three-plus years, Jesus lifted up those who were marginalized and outcast. He touched a leper (Matt. 8:2-3). He honored the poor (Luke 21:1-4). He spoke to a Samaritan woman with a tarnished moral reputation—and even entered a theological conversation with her (John 4:1-30). He fulfilled His mission of preaching the good news to the poor, proclaiming deliverance to the captives, restoring sight to the blind, and setting free the oppressed (Luke 4:18).

Jesus had previously referred to His disciples as servants and friends (John 15:15). Here, for the first recorded time, Jesus called them **my brethren**. His death had changed their relationship. Through Christ's redemptive work, God adopts us as sons and daughters (see Rom. 8:14-15; Eph. 1:5; Heb. 2:11).

Jesus further emphasized the inclusiveness of this new intimate relationship by saying, ***I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*** The relationship Jesus had with God, His Father, was not restricted to His disciples, His brothers—Mary Magdalene was part of the family as well.

Jesus gave Mary two imperatives: **go** and **say**. She was obedient; she **came** and **told**. This woman, out of whom Jesus had exorcised seven demons, was the first to see the risen Christ, the first to hear His voice, the first to touch Him, and the first to be commissioned to share the news of His resurrection. She announced that **she had seen the Lord**. That one sentence changed everything.

**How does Jesus reveal Himself today as the resurrected Savior?**

---

---

---

### **KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son***

He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. (See John 20:27-28; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.)

# APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers can challenge others to examine the truth of the empty tomb.
- People can take their questions to God.
- Believers can tell others about Jesus.

**Discuss as a group the elements of the resurrection account that cause the greatest amazement. How can the group remind each other in the days and weeks ahead about the wonder of the resurrection? How should the wonder of the resurrection impact how the Bible study group functions?**

---

---

**For many, one of the most effective methods of leading people to Christ is to simply tell about your experience with Him. That was what Mary Magdalene did. Who do you know that might be receptive to hearing about your experience with Jesus? Pray for the Lord to use you to tell others about Him.**

---

---

## PRAYER NEEDS

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# *When the Spirit Comes*

The Holy Spirit points people to the truth.

## **JOHN 15:26-27; 16:7-15**

Two reporters can cover the same newsworthy event and yet walk away with very different stories if they consult different sources. If we read both reporters' stories, we may wonder if we can trust either to be accurate or discredit one based on our own bias. This becomes more complicated when we are considering issues that impact our lives and the lives of others. We need a reliable source we can trust.

**How do phrases like “a person inside the organization” or “a source with knowledge of the case” give you confidence in a news story? How do you know a source can be trusted?**

---

---

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## JOHN 15:26–16:33

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal power; He is the Third Person of the Trinity. He is the Spirit of God, fully divine. The Holy Spirit fills believers, guides them into truth, and enables them to witness about Jesus effectively. In the disciples' search for truth, He guides them. In their distress, the Spirit comforts them. In their ministry, the Spirit enables them. In everything, He glorifies Jesus.

Throughout His dialogue with the disciples, Jesus continually reminded them that He would soon be going away. They were deeply concerned (John 14:1; 16:6). They would face opposition from powerful political and religious forces. They would be ostracized from their places of worship by their own people. In fact, the Jews would think they were following God by destroying Jesus's followers. The disciples would endure pain and death. They had a challenging mission to take Jesus's gospel to the world, and they would not have His physical presence with them. Yet, Jesus promised they would not be left alone. They would have the Holy Spirit. With Him, they could go forth in power and confidence.

When Jesus rose from the grave, the disciples' sorrow was turned into joy. His ascension into heaven, though, was not yet clear to them. Jesus spoke plainly about leaving the world and going to the Father. Abandoning figurative language, Jesus revealed what was about to happen. He told them the day was approaching when they would be persecuted and scattered. In the midst of suffering, they could go forth in courage because He had overcome the world.

**As you read John 15:26-27; 16:7-15, highlight what Jesus taught about the role to be played by the Holy Spirit. How would Jesus's speaking to His disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit give them assurance and confidence?**

---

---

---

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## TESTIFY (JOHN 15:26-27)

**<sup>26</sup> But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: <sup>27</sup> And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.**

### VERSES 26-27

Jesus again referred to the Holy Spirit as **the Comforter** (see John 14:16,26). The word translated *comforter* (*parakletos*, pronounced *par-ah-klay-toss*) means one who stands alongside another, who has been called to a person's aid, and who is an advocate that pleads someone's case before the judge.

Earlier, when speaking of the Spirit, Jesus said the Father would send Him, He would be with the disciples forever, He is the Spirit of truth, He would come in the name of Jesus, He would teach the disciples all things, and He would remind them of what Jesus had said (14:16-17,25-26). Here in 15:26-27, Jesus returned to some of the same themes but highlighted an additional and important task of the Holy Spirit—He would **testify** about Jesus.

The theme of testifying runs through John's Gospel. John the Baptist came to testify about Jesus (1:7-8; 5:33). The works Jesus did testified that the Father had sent Him, the Father testified about Jesus, and the Scriptures testify about Him (5:36-39). Jesus testified about Himself (8:18), and what Christ did in the Father's name testified about Jesus (10:25). Not only would the Spirit testify about Jesus, He would lead believers to do the same. The Spirit empowers believers for the work of being witnesses about Jesus (Acts 1:8).

The spotlight belongs on Jesus. The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus, and believers do the same. This is a reminder that the Christian faith is never about us; it is all about Jesus.

There is no ambiguity in what Jesus said: **when the Comforter is come . . . he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness.** Jesus was absolutely certain everything He was saying would come to complete fulfillment, and indeed it did in the very near future. This is a reminder that the Lord's promises are steadfast and true.

The context of these two verses clearly shows that believers are to give testimony about Jesus to a sinful world that is lost without Him. John 15:18-25 and 16:1-4 speak of the persecutions Christ's disciples will face. Believers are not only to live in a world that may be openly hostile to the Christian faith, we are to confront that world with the glorious news that Jesus saves. He alone has the words of life (John 6:68). Thankfully, we do not go into that world by ourselves; we go in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**What role does the Holy Spirit play in our telling others about Jesus?**

---

---

## **CONVICTS** (JOHN 16:7-11)

**<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. <sup>8</sup> And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: <sup>9</sup> Of sin, because they believe not on me; <sup>10</sup> Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; <sup>11</sup> Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.**

### **VERSE 7**

The fact Jesus was going away must have been inconceivable to His followers. Their lives had been completely transformed when He called each to be His follower. They had forsaken everything to follow Him (Matt. 19:27). In the years since, they had heard Jesus teach and saw Him stand up to the religious leaders and confront their hypocrisy. They had watched Him restore sight to the blind, heal lepers and the lame, deliver the oppressed and possessed, and raise the dead. To say that His leaving was for their good had to be unthinkable.

Jesus connected His departure with the coming of the Spirit. He explained that as long as He was present, the Holy Spirit would not come. After leaving, though, He would send the Spirit to them. They would experience the Spirit in a profoundly personal way that they could not otherwise. As long as Jesus was with them, the disciples

were limited in their conception of and experience with the Spirit. In God's perfect time, the Holy Spirit would fall on the disciples, fill their human spirits, and fulfill Christ's mission through them.

---

### **KEY DOCTRINE:** *Holy Spirit*

He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. (See Isaiah 61:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14.)

### **VERSES 8-11**

Jesus explained what the Holy Spirit would do when He came—He would **reprove** or convict. We typically think of someone being convicted in a legal sense, of someone being punished for breaking the law. That, though, is not the meaning in this instance, as indicated by two other usages of the same Greek word. Speaking of those who do evil and thus love the darkness, Jesus said such a person avoids the light “lest his deeds should be *reproved*” (John 3:20, emphasis added). Later, when the religious leaders opposed Jesus, He said, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (8:46). Both instances refer to bringing an error to light. Recall that **world** did not refer to the planet earth. Jesus used the word to refer to the realm where humans live and, more specifically, to their spiritual rebellion and disobedience (see John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 7:7; 8:12; 12:46)

Jesus had already forewarned the disciples: “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:2). Why would the disciples face such persecution and punishment? It would be because those who inflicted such torment would claim the disciples had sinned, were unrighteous, and deserving of judgment.

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would expose or bring to light the error that the rebellious and disobedient held onto concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. Significantly, Jesus was about to be put on trial where He would be declared the sinful, unrighteous one, deserving of judgment. The exact opposite, though, was true. Jesus was righteous, holy, and true—deserving of adoration and praise. The world was in error, not Jesus.

The word **sin** is singular and refers not to sins in a general sense but to the ultimate sin of not believing in Jesus. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said, “He that believeth on him [Jesus] is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Not believing in Jesus results in a person being estranged from God and facing judgment.

The Jews misunderstood **righteousness**. Isaiah proclaimed, “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). Jesus was the ultimate model of righteousness during His earthly life. He was the perfect manifestation and embodiment of the holiness of God; “in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5; see also Isa. 53:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15). No longer would the epitome of righteousness be visible because He would soon **go to the Father**.

Concerning His death, Jesus earlier stated, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:31). Here, He repeated much the same thought; **the prince of this world**—Satan, the father of all lies, the accuser of God’s people, and the great deceiver—already **is judged** (John 8:44; Rev. 12:9-10). The crucifixion, which Satan thought to be his crowning moment, was his crushing blow. Because of Christ’s atoning work, no longer would sin and rebellion retain their stronghold. This truth allowed Paul to proclaim, “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

Believers depend on the Holy Spirit to convict others about sin. Polished presentations and harsh words do not entice unbelievers to faith in Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can convince people they are sinners in desperate need of a Savior. Only He can lead persons to repentance. Only He can open their hearts to the truth and love of Jesus. Only He can take the seed of faith and bear fruit in the soil of Christ’s atonement.

**How does the Holy Spirit convict people about sin, righteousness, and judgment? How can believers cooperate with the Spirit to bring people to repentance and faith?**

---

---

## GUIDES (JOHN 16:12-15)

**<sup>12</sup> I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. <sup>14</sup> He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. <sup>15</sup> All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.**

### VERSES 12-15

Jesus still had *many things* to tell His disciples. He did not do so, though, because they could not *bear* it. The term *bear* conveys the idea of comprehension and acceptance rather than mere endurance. The enormity of Christ's death and resurrection and their role in establishing Christ's church would have overwhelmed them.

Jesus knew what His disciples were going through. They were sorrowful at the thought of His leaving, and they were anxious and confused about the approaching conflict. Jesus knew that when the Spirit came, the situation would be different.

He foretold what the *Spirit of truth* would do when He comes. Again, there was no sense of ambiguity or any possibility that these things would not happen: ***when he, the Spirit of truth, is come***—not “if”; ***he will***—not “He might.”

Jesus promised that the Spirit would *guide* His disciples in ***all truth***. John gave an example of this happening a few days earlier as the people cheered when Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem: “These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him” (John 12:16; see also Luke 9:43-45; 18:31-34).

**What is the significance of Jesus calling the Counselor the “Spirit of truth”? Why is it necessary for us to have a Guide when it comes to truth?**

---

---

---

Jesus previously had explained that His words came from the Father (John 7:16; 14:10). Similarly, the Spirit will **not speak of himself**; He will speak **whatsoever he shall hear**. This a reminder that the Spirit’s messages will always agree with what God has revealed in His Word.

John had firsthand experience with the Spirit declaring **things to come**. While exiled on the island of Patmos, he “was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” when he received the revelation of future events (Rev. 1:10; see also 4:1-11; 17:3; 21:10). God the Spirit knows the future, but His role involves guiding followers of Christ so they can carry out His mission in confidence.

The ultimate task of the Spirit is to **glorify** Jesus—just as Jesus had glorified the Father by revealing Him. Christ came as the Word incarnate, God in human flesh and form. In doing so, “and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, see also 1:18; 13:31-32; 14:8-13; 17:1).

In a summary statement, Jesus explained that the source for all that the Spirit would do and reveal would be the Father Himself. The Father had been the source for the Son; He would now be the source through the Son to the Spirit and, ultimately, to the disciples. All three are involved in guiding followers of Christ into knowing, understanding, and following truth.

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.*

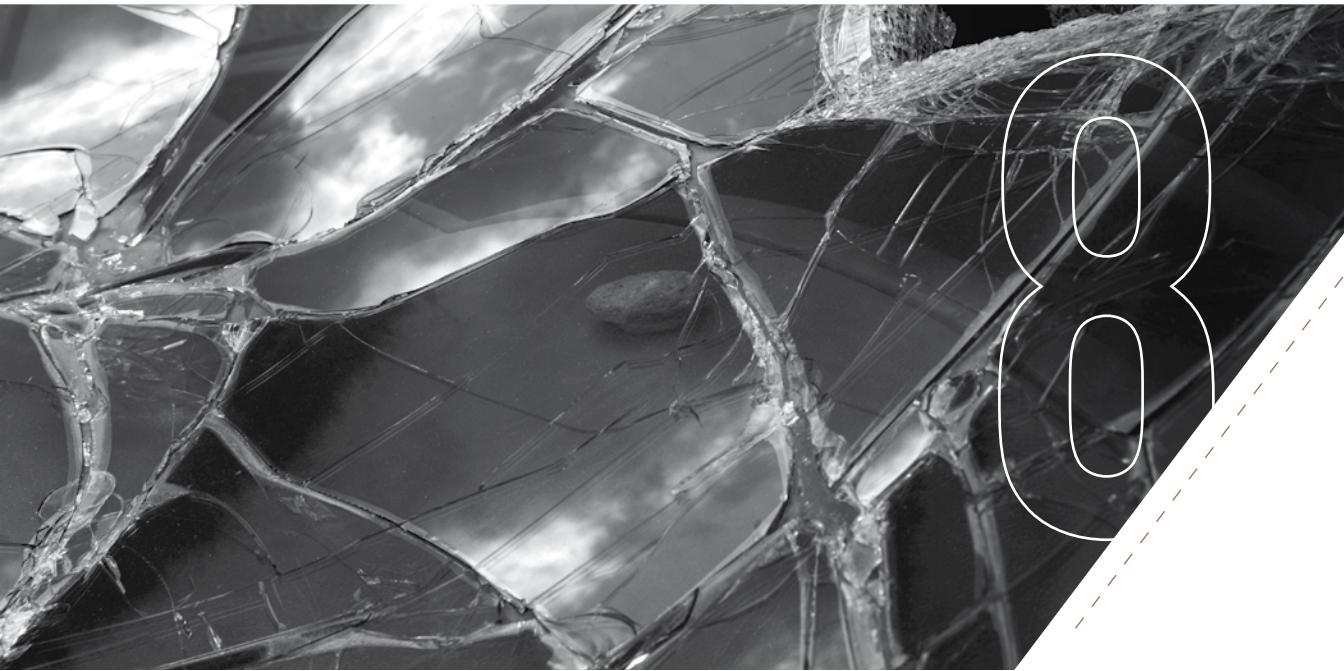
Compare the following passages, noting the activities of the Holy Spirit found in each passage: John 14:26; 16:7-8,13-15; Romans 8:26-27; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Timothy 3:16; Titus 3:4-6. How does His role give you a greater appreciation for Jesus promising to send the Spirit? Write a short paragraph explaining the role the Holy Spirit plays in a believer’s life.

---

---

---





## *I Pray*

A shared commitment to God's purposes produces unity among all believers.

### **JOHN 17:13-26**

French chemist Edouard Benedictus invented shatterproof glass when he accidentally dropped a flask that had a thin layer of dried plastic cellulose nitrate residue inside it. Although covered in a web of cracks, the thin film kept the flask together. The pieces were bound by the properties of the film. Believers are bound today by the properties of our Savior. Jesus prayed that all believers would be unified by a shared faith and purpose.

**What is one thing you wish were shatterproof but is not? Explain.**

---

---

# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **JOHN 17:1-26**

In the upper room, Jesus shared the Passover meal with His disciples and washed their feet. After Judas exited, Jesus taught the Eleven about the coming of the Holy Spirit, abiding in Him, loving one another, and enduring persecution. When He had finished teaching, Jesus turned His voice toward heaven.

Jesus's hour had arrived. He asked the Father to glorify Him so the Father may be glorified in Him. While Jesus's death and resurrection were the centerpiece of Jesus's glory, the disciples also played a role in His exaltation. Jesus's prayer for His followers included several themes that intertwined to glorify Him.

First, Jesus was glorified by giving eternal life to those who believed in Him. The Father gave Him to them and them to Him. This passage defines eternal life as knowing God the Father and Jesus whom He sent. Conversely, judgment lies in the fact that unbelievers do not know Jesus and are not known by Him (Matt. 7:23).

Second, Jesus glorified the Father by giving them His words. The disciples did not merely hear His words; they received them. Jesus was glorified in the disciples as they believed and followed Him.

Third, Jesus asked the Father to protect them. Jesus knew an unbelieving world would persecute them. He also foresaw how Satan would try to destroy them because of Him. Jesus did not pray that they would escape difficulty, but that the Father would be with them in the midst of their struggle.

Finally, Jesus not only prayed for the disciples gathered with Him that night. He also prayed for everyone who would believe through the disciples' testimony. Knowing Jesus intercedes for us today gives us confidence to fulfill His will and share His word so others might also know Him and be with Him forever.

**As you read through John 17:13-26, look for how Jesus mentioned His past actions, His current concerns, and His future desires. How does His prayer frame Jesus's expectations for His followers?**

---

---

# EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

## **SANCTIFY** (JOHN 17:13-19)

**<sup>13</sup> And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.**

### **VERSE 13**

Jesus earlier told His disciples He would be leaving them and returning to heaven (John 14:1-6,12; 16:5-7,16,28). During this prayer, though, Jesus said to the Father: ***now come I to thee*** (see also v. 11). Making this statement, Jesus likely was thinking about the heavenly realm from which He had come (John 3:3; 6:38,62; 17:5). The disparity between the glorious and eternal realm and ***the world*** is beyond understanding (1 Cor. 2:9).

In a world of rebellion and spiritual confusion, Jesus had spoken ***these things***, a phrase that referred to the lengthy teaching He had shared in the upper room (13:12–16:33). He knew that receiving these truths would cause His ***joy*** to be ***fulfilled*** in them. His ***joy*** is not based on current circumstances; it's based on God's eternal purposes and protection. Jesus alone is the source of this joy.

### **VERSES 14-16**

In total, Jesus mentioned ***the world*** eighteen times in this prayer. In almost each instance, He contrasted God's holiness with the sinful realm in which humans live. At one point, He said His disciples had come from the world (v. 6). In verse 14, however, Jesus declared the disciples ***are not of the world***. What had made such a significant difference in these men?

For three-plus years, these men had been with Jesus. In that time, He had **given them** God’s **word**. Here *word* does not refer to Scripture; it refers to a unified block of teaching, a particular theme, or a specific lesson. The message was that God had come to earth in human form “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). He had come so that those who were dead in their trespasses and sin might “have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Jesus stated, “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me” (17:8). The disciples received and kept the words Jesus spoke. So complete was their resultant transformation that Jesus could say **they are not of the world**.

Jesus did not ask God to take the disciples **out of the world** but that He would **keep them from the evil** one, meaning the devil (Eph. 2:2; see also John 14:30).

### How can believers engage with an antagonistic world?

---

#### VERSES 17-19

Jesus asked the Father both to protect His disciples and to **sanctify them through thy truth**, which is God’s word. The Greek verb translated *sanctify* carries the idea of being made holy and set apart for God’s service. Sanctification is an ongoing process that begins at salvation. It continues through the Holy Spirit’s ongoing work as the believer increasingly walks according to God’s revealed *truth*.

Jesus prayed His disciples would be protected, unified, and sanctified because He was sending them into a hostile environment, just as the world had been hostile toward Him. Jesus wanted His disciples to be prepared for the mission ahead.

### How does living a sanctified, or set apart, life serve as a contrast when compared to what the world offers?

---

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Dig deeper into the background and usage of key words or phrases.*

Using a Bible dictionary, look up the term *sanctification*. Compare Old Testament passages listed with New Testament passages listed. Identify synonyms for sanctify (such as “consecrate”). How do Old Testament references help us understand the New Testament concept?

---

---

**UNITE** (JOHN 17:20-23)

**<sup>20</sup> Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; <sup>21</sup> That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. <sup>22</sup> And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: <sup>23</sup> I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.**

**VERSES 20-21**

Jesus broadened His focus of His prayer to include those who would come to faith as a result of His disciples’ ministry and mission. He was praying for subsequent spiritual generations, those who would come to faith through the disciples’ **word**. This was the message Jesus had received from the Father and had shared with them. The disciples would deliver this same message of salvation, beginning in just a few days. The impact of Christ’s prayer continues today. Jesus prayed for **them also which shall believe on me**, without specifying a time frame. This means Christians today are among those for whom He prayed.

Jesus prayed His followers would embody the oneness He and the Father share. Although the two are separate and distinguishable, Jesus and the Father are one (John 14:9). Thus, although we believers each have our own spiritual gifts, talents, and personalities, we are to be unified in our love for others, our mission and message, our

purpose and proclamation. This type of oneness never occurs by accident; it is possible only by divine design. Our unity testifies to the divine nature of Christ—that the Father had sent Him. Believers’ relationships are not intended merely to make us feel good about one another. Earlier, Jesus said the world would know we are His disciples by our love (John 13:35). Sadly, conflict between Christians remains one of the primary negative influences cited by unbelievers for not coming to Jesus. How we treat each other makes a difference.

### **Why is Christian unity such an important aspect of our witness to an unbelieving world?**

---

---

#### **VERSES 22-23**

Jesus began His prayer with a petition for glory: “glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee” (17:1). At this point, Jesus revealed He had given His disciples **the glory** the Father had given Him. This is not a reference to the *glory* Jesus had from eternity past (17:5). Instead, it was the glory God revealed through His public ministry and work. When Jesus turned water to wine, He “manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him” (John 2:11). Jesus prayed that His disciples would have this same manifestation of God’s glory in their lives and ministry, so that people would continue to believe in Jesus through their works. He knew this shared glory would be a unifier for the disciples; it would help them **be one, even as we** [Jesus and the Father] **are one**.

Reiterating His plea for unity, Jesus prayed that His disciples might **be made perfect in one**. This unity authenticates that believers have had a genuine life-altering encounter with Christ; each has been the recipient of God’s grace and forgiveness. The gospel unifies us. This unity is evidence God has **loved** us the same way He loved Christ.

### **How does a shared faith unify believers from different cultures?**

---

---

## GATHER (JOHN 17:24-26)

<sup>24</sup> **Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.**

<sup>25</sup> **O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.** <sup>26</sup> **And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.**

### VERSE 24

The disciples were saddened when Jesus said He would be going away. He reassured them, saying, “Let not your heart be troubled . . . if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (14:1-3). Near the end of His prayer, Jesus circled back to this thought and asked that His disciples would be with Him in glory. We might easily understand the disciples wanting to be with Jesus, but here Jesus prayed, ***Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.*** Jesus expressed His heart’s desire for His disciples to be in eternal fellowship with Him. What a humbling thought that Jesus wants to be with us for eternity!

**What impact does the promise of seeing the glory of God have on the way we love others?**

---

---

### VERSES 25-26

In His prayer, Jesus called God “Father” (17:1,5) and “Holy Father” (v. 11). In this final address Jesus referred to Him as ***righteous Father***. It’s the only time the New Testament uses this title.

Echoing a thought introduced early in John’s Gospel, “the world knew him [Jesus] not” (1:10), Christ stated ***the world hath not known thee***—meaning the Father. Jesus, however, knew the Father, and, because He had revealed the Father to His disciples, they came to “believe that thou [Jesus] camest forth from God” (16:30) and that the Father had ***sent*** Him.

When He said, ***I have declared unto them thy name***, Jesus was not saying He revealed God’s actual name to the disciples the same way God revealed His name to Moses at the burning bush. Jesus meant He had revealed God’s character and identity as His “Father.”

After His resurrection, Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, “but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17). This was the beginning of Jesus continuing to make known God’s name to His followers. The phrase ***and will declare it*** clearly shows Jesus would continue to reveal Himself and the Father to the disciples even after His ascension and departure. Although Jesus did not mention the Holy Spirit in this prayer, earlier statements show this continued revelation would come through the Spirit’s work in the disciples (16:13-14).

Jesus concluded His prayer by affirming two desires, first, that His disciples would experience the fullness of God’s love—the same love the Father had for the Son. Second, Jesus stated He would be ***in them***. The psalmist had pleaded, “O God, be not far from me” (Ps. 71:12). In the coming of Immanuel, indeed “God is with us” (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). After the ascension, Jesus, in the person of the Holy Spirit, would be even closer—within His disciples, never to be separated again. Because of His presence within them, Christ’s followers are spiritually united in faith and purpose.

Jesus prayed for His disciples to be united, that they would be one. That kind of unity occurs only by the supernatural work of our Heavenly Father—it never happens by accident.

---

### **KEY DOCTRINE: *The Church***

The New Testament speaks of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. (See Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 7:9-10.)





# *I Am He*

Jesus is always in control and committed to the redemption of humanity.

## **JOHN 18:1-11**

Most of us have mistaken someone for another person. Once we discover they are not who we thought they were, we may be amused, embarrassed, or relieved. In the Garden of Gethsemane, there was no way to mistake Jesus for someone else. Not only did Judas identify Him with a kiss to the cheek, but Jesus boldly stated, “I am he.” He was not afraid of Judas or the mob. This was His hour.

**When you mistake someone for another person, how did you react once you realized their identity?**

---

---

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## JOHN 18:1-11

In the upper room, Jesus began His prayer with, “Father, the hour is come” (John 17:1). It was time. As Jesus and the disciples crossed the Kidron (Cedron) brook on the eastern side of Jerusalem, they ascended the Mount of Olives to a very different scene. Jesus often resorted to the Garden of Gethsemane for prayer during His journeys to Jerusalem. Familiar with this mountainside retreat, Judas knew where to bring the soldiers assigned by the chief priests to arrest Jesus. John’s Gospel does not include Jesus’s intense prayers while waiting in the Garden (Matt. 26:36-56). John was so focused on Jesus’s betrayal, death, and resurrection that he moved directly to the betrayer’s approach. The torch-bearing mob shattered the peace of this place of prayer as they moved cautiously to seize the Lord.

John also did not mention Judas’s kiss of betrayal (Matt. 26:48-50). Still, Jesus knew what was happening. He asked the officials with Judas who they were seeking. When they replied, Jesus firmly stated, “I am he.” The power of His presence and the authority of His manner strongly impacted the crowd as they fell back to the ground. He asked the question again. When He affirmed He was the One, the soldiers moved forward to take Him.

Jesus’s disciples were not so quick to give up. Peter drew a sword and apparently tried to cut off the head of a servant of the high priest. Slicing off the man’s ear could have resulted in Peter’s arrest or worse, but Jesus healed the man and rebuked Peter. If He wanted to resist, Jesus had angelic armies on whom He could call to defend Him and destroy His enemies (Matt. 26:53).

When the soldiers made no move to seize Peter or others, the disciples fled into the night. The mob was not interested in them. They only wanted Jesus.

**Read John 18:1-11 in your Bible and underline details that point to Jesus being in control. How does His being in control affirm His divinity and lordship?**

---

---

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## SHOW OF FORCE (JOHN 18:1-3)

**<sup>1</sup> When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. <sup>2</sup> And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. <sup>3</sup> Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.**

### VERSE 1

Can you imagine what the disciples were thinking after ***Jesus had spoken these words***? Jesus had spoken to them about the necessity of being a servant as He washed their feet. He had foretold Judas's betrayal and that they would face persecution. He had instructed them to love one another as He had loved them. He spoke of praying in His name and of abiding in Him. He said He was returning to the Father and would be sending the Counselor who would be with them always. He had told them their sorrow would be turned to joy. The disciples had much to think about as they left the upper room.

Walking westward, they crossed the ***brook Cedron*** (•Kidron Valley), which ran north and south between the walled city of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. Except for during the winter rainy season, this ravine is a dry stream bed. Because Passover was celebrated at the full moon, the disciples would have had adequate light for crossing the valley.

The Greek word translated ***garden*** can refer to any cultivated plot of land, from a small patch to a large orchard or plantation. Jesus and His disciples went into the garden, terminology that likely indicates a wall or some other clear boundary surrounded it. Matthew and Mark referred to the location as "Gethsemane" (Matt. 26:36; Mark 14:32). John called it a garden. Luke simply called it "the place" (22:40).

The other Gospel writers state Jesus prayed while in the garden and asked the Father to let this cup pass from Him. John's Gospel does not mention "the cup" until later. Jesus asked Peter, James, and John to join Him in the garden and to pray with Him since He was

“exceeding sorrowful unto death” (Mark 14:34). The three, though, weary from the long day, kept falling asleep while Jesus prayed. Luke mentioned that as Jesus fervently prayed, His sweat fell to the ground like drops of blood (Luke 22:44).

---

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

“Gethsemane” derives from two Hebrew words that mean “oil press”—likely referring to an olive press. Owners of olive groves often put presses in their gardens and, if possible, located them in a cave within the garden. The cave, which was cooler, would provide protection from the elements. Thus, the picture of Gethsemane is of an enclosed and secluded olive grove in which there was a cave with an olive press inside.

### **VERSES 2-3**

Jesus *ofttimes* met His disciples at this location (see Luke 21:37). Because Judas had doubtlessly been with Jesus on those earlier visits, he knew where to find Him.

Judas brought *a band of men* with him. The term can refer to a cohort, which is a Roman military unit that included up to 600 soldiers. These were Roman soldiers who were stationed at the Antonia Fortress on the northeast corner of the Jerusalem temple. Accompanying the soldiers were *officers from the chief priests and Pharisees*. This group would have been part of the temple police, Jews who patrolled and protected the temple and temple grounds. The temple police would have served as the arresting officers. The *weapons* indicated they expected resistance. The Jews and Romans were determined to take Jesus into custody and were ready to use whatever and as much force as was necessary to do so.

**What does the presence of armed soldiers tell us about the expectations of Judas and the accompanying officials?**

---

---

## POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION (JOHN 18:4-9)

<sup>4</sup> Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? <sup>5</sup> They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. <sup>6</sup> As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup> Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: <sup>9</sup> That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

### VERSES 4-7

John's statement, *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him*, was an affirmation of Christ's sovereign omniscience. Judas's betrayal did not take Him by surprise. In fact, by choosing to be in this location at this moment, Jesus was showing that He was orchestrating each detail of His betrayal and arrest. He knew what moves were coming next. He was in charge—not Judas, not the Romans, and not the temple police.

---

### KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

Christ is the eternal Son of God. (See Psalm 110:1-4; John 1:1-4.)

Stepping forward, Jesus asked: *Whom seek ye?* He would repeat this question in a few minutes. They responded with *Jesus of Nazareth*. This was their official answer; they would soon repeat their reply as well. The title would again be used for Jesus—it was on the sign that hung above His head on the cross (John 19:19).

The Greek text does not include the word translated *he*. Hence, Jesus replied by simply saying *I am*, again using the Father's name for Himself and thereby affirming His divinity (see Ex. 3:14). When Jesus had earlier used the name for Himself, the religious leaders took up stones to kill Him (John 8:58-59). What happened this time, though, was dramatically different!

In an incredible and unique display of Christ's lordship, just speaking the divine name caused His enemies to step back and fall **to the ground**. This detail is included only in John's Gospel. Can you imagine hundreds of armed strong men falling helplessly backwards like dominoes? This scene screams that Jesus had all the power; He was in complete control. That Judas **stood with them** indicates he also fell backwards.

Having made His divine identity known through the spoken word, Jesus again asked these armed men who were lying on the ground, **Whom seek ye?** Certainly, the soldiers did not speak with as much vigor and authority this time as they replied, **Jesus of Nazareth**. Although this crowd did not recognize His deity, they could not ignore His power.

#### VERSES 8-9

By asking a second time and having the soldiers repeat their reply, Jesus was clarifying they were there to arrest Him alone, not His disciples. In saying, **I have told you that I am he**, He was distinguishing Himself from His disciples. The soldiers and temple police had followed orders that led them to the night's actions. This time, Jesus would give the order, **let these go their way**, referring to His disciples. Having seen the remarkable display of the Nazarene's power, no one protested or said, "Who do you think you are to give us orders? You do what we say, not the other way around."

In giving this order, Jesus was putting Himself between His followers and the enemy. In a very real sense, this is what redemption and salvation are all about. Christ has positioned Himself as the sacrifice to protect His own. He revealed Himself to be the Good Shepherd who willingly gives His life for His sheep (John 10:12-13). This momentary display of physical protection is a snapshot of the spiritual and eternal security that only Jesus can give.

That the disciples were not taken into custody again underscored that Jesus was in control of all that happened in the garden that night. It also fulfilled what Jesus had said earlier in His prayer in the upper room, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition" (John 17:12).

**How did John's portrayal of the conversation between Jesus and the group point to Jesus's being in charge?**

---

---

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

Read Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-50; and Luke 22:35-38,49-53 as well as the session passage. Write out a timeline placing each event in order as much as possible. How does the timeline help you get a better picture of what happened? How does Jesus's rebuke of Peter produce deeper insight into Jesus's understanding of His mission and the fulfillment of the Father's will?

---

---

---

## **REBELLION SNUFFED (JOHN 18:10-11)**

**<sup>10</sup> Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. <sup>11</sup> Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?**

### **VERSES 10-11**

Having seen the remarkable display of Christ's power, the disciples felt emboldened. They asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" (Luke 22:49). **Simon Peter**, caught up in this wave of courage, did not wait for a reply. He drew his sword and **cut off** the right ear of **Malchus**, who was the **high priest's servant**. Peter likely was aiming for the man's head. Earlier that evening, Peter declared he would die for Jesus (Matt. 26:35). In this moment, he was in danger of doing

just that. Jesus stopped Peter's attack. If Jesus had not intervened, the soldiers probably would have responded with deadly force or at least by seizing Peter and the other disciples. Luke said the disciples had two swords; thus, Simon Peter was probably not the only one carrying a weapon. Luke also included the fact Jesus touched and restored Malchus's ear (Luke 22:38,51).

This defensive scene in the garden highlights two truths. First, Jesus did not need defending. He had already shown that the most formidable soldiers of His day were powerless against just His spoken word. Additionally, Jesus had at His beck and call legions of angels who would have readily appeared and stepped forward in order to protect Him (Matt. 26:53).

Second, the scene is a reminder that the disciples were still thinking Jesus was going to be a political leader. They had earlier heard the crowds as they attempted to crown Jesus as their king. They had seen the throngs cheering for Him as He rode into the city on the back of a donkey (John 6:15; 12:12-16). All the way to the ascension, the Lord's disciples were expecting some type of military or political takeover. That was what was behind their question, "Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?" Jesus understood their desire for power. He explained, though, that the power they would receive would be from the Holy Spirit who would commission them to be His "witnesses . . . both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:6,8). Jesus would not empower them to be His warriors but His witnesses.

Knowing His glorification would not come through political or military acts, Jesus challenged Simon Peter, ***the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*** This was the cup of God's fury, His judgment on a sinful world (Isa. 51:22; Rev. 14:10). Jesus was always obedient to the Father: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). Recognizing it to be the Father's will, Jesus would willingly drink from that cup.

**Why was it important for John to note Jesus's response to Peter?**

---

---

# APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers can expect enemies of Jesus to use maximum force against Him.
- Believers can confidently face life knowing that Jesus is in charge.
- Believers can obediently involve themselves in God’s redemptive plan.

**Discuss as a group ways people oppose Jesus today. What kinds of “weapons” do they use to attempt to silence or destroy Jesus and His gospel in the world today? What can your group do to encourage each other and others to stand boldly for Jesus?**

---

---

**Think of an area of difficulty in your life. How does knowing Jesus is in charge help strengthen your faith and confidence for the future? What opportunity can you take this week to tell a friend or family member about the Lord demonstrating His control in your life?**

---

---

## PRAYER NEEDS

---

---

---

---

---

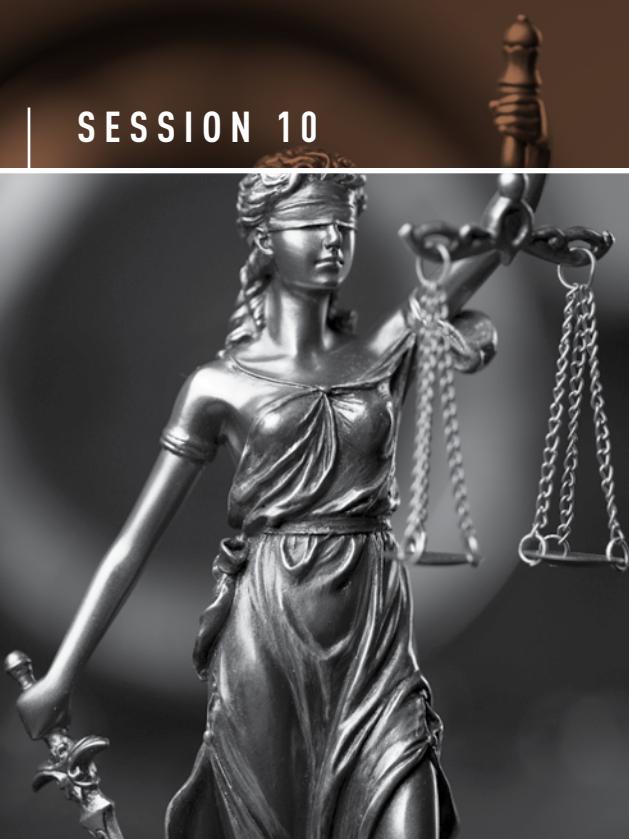
---

---

---

---

---



## 10

## *I Find No Fault*

Jesus was without guilt and sinless in every way.

### JOHN 18:28-40

“We the jury find the defendant . . .” Most of us are intrigued about the factors that swayed a jury to decide one way or the other. The appeal of whodunit novels and stories highlight our desire to piece together the evidence so we can develop our own verdict. Pilate interviewed Jesus to piece together the evidence and found Him not guilty. Yet, Pilate ignored his own conclusion and handed Jesus over to the mob for crucifixion.

**What factors intrigue you the most when watching a legal drama or reading a book about legal proceedings?**

---

---

# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **JOHN 18:12–19:15**

By torchlight, an armed mob seized Jesus and brought Him bound before Annas. A former high priest, Annas retained considerable power and lived in the palace of his son-in-law, Caiaphas, the current high priest. In this hearing, Jesus was falsely accused and cruelly treated. When He challenged His assailants to testify of any wrongdoing, He was met with silence since they had no real evidence. Subsequently, Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas for further examination.

These hearings, held at night against lawful procedures, took place while Simon Peter waited in the palace courtyard. Peter had followed John into the compound to see what would happen to Jesus. Already frightened by the events in the garden, Peter responded defensively when questioned about his association with Jesus. Three times various people accused him of associating with Jesus, and three times Peter denied knowing Him. Following his third denial, a rooster crowed for the second time. Reminded of Jesus's predictions, Peter fled the palace in tears.

Shortly after daybreak, knowing they lacked authority to execute Jesus, the Jewish leaders took Him to the Roman governor. At first, Pilate refused to hear the case. Finally, he yielded to their insistence and questioned Jesus. He focused his interrogation on whether Jesus claimed to be a king. Such an assertion would be treasonous in an empire ruled by Caesar.

After further examination, Pilate declared he found no fault in Jesus. He recognized the false testimony of conflicting witnesses to be a set-up by the Jewish authorities. Several times, Pilate sought to release Jesus. Instead, the Jews cried out for the governor to release a criminal named Barabbas. As the crowd became increasingly unruly, Pilate gave Jesus over to be scourged and crucified.

**Read John 18:28–40 in your Bible, noting the progression in the conversation between Pilate and Jesus. How do Jesus's responses lead Pilate to conclude Jesus to be innocent?**

---

---

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## THE TRANSFER (JOHN 18:28-32)

**<sup>28</sup> Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. <sup>29</sup> Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? <sup>30</sup> They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. <sup>31</sup> Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: <sup>32</sup> That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.**

### VERSE 28

The appearance before Annas would have been for an informal hearing; being brought before the Sanhedrin, though, was significant. This was the highest ruling Jewish body of the first century. They heard accusations against Jesus—even though the testimonies were contradictory (Mark 14:56). Two accusers stepped forward and recalled how Jesus stated He could rebuild the temple in three days. The high priest accused Jesus of blasphemy, a charge that called for the death penalty (Lev. 24:16). The Sanhedrin did not have authority to put anyone to death. For that to happen, Jesus would need to appear before the Roman authorities. •**Caiaphas** had received the sentence he wanted for Jesus; the so-called trial before the religious leaders was thus complete.

**They**, the chief priests, tied Jesus up again and led Him to **the hall of judgment**. All the Sanhedrin accompanied them (Luke 23:1-2). Jewish law was passed down orally through the generations. Eventually these laws and traditions were put into a written document known as the Mishnah. This text claimed all Gentile homes were unclean; entering resulted in a defilement requiring a seven-day purification period. The Jewish leaders who led Jesus to *the hall of judgment* thus stayed outside in the courtyard. Doing otherwise meant they would have been unable to eat the Passover meal. In the

scenes that follow, Pilate entered and exited the residence as he talked with Jesus inside the headquarters and the Jewish leaders outside.

### VERSES 29-32

Emperor Tiberias had appointed **•Pilate** as governor of Judea in AD 26. Pilate showed himself to be an insecure, insensitive, and morally weak leader who responded to perceived threats with excessive brutality (Luke 13:1). His ruthlessness eventually led to his being removed from office after eleven years of service.

Rather than simply rubber stamp the Sanhedrin's decision to kill Jesus, Pilate asked what charges were being brought against Him. Those who led Jesus offered no specific accusation. They brazenly declared that handing Jesus over to Pilate was proof enough that He was a **malefactor** and worthy of death. The word for *malefactor* referred to a wicked person who disobeyed the law. Other Gospel writers note additional charges made against Jesus, including opposition to taxes and claiming to be Messiah, the king of the Jews (Luke 23:2). Tension between the Jewish rulers and Pilate was unmistakable. The Jews resented the presence of the emperor's occupation forces. With an attitude typical to Romans, Pilate despised the Jews.

Pilate saw through their scheme and wanted no part of their plot. His saying, **take ye him, and judge him according to your law**, forced the Jews to admit they were powerless to execute Jesus. If Jesus's alleged crimes were against Roman law, Pilate would have exercised quick and severe justice. Since the priests were accusing Jesus of violating their religious rules, Pilate initially refused to play the game.

The Jews thought they had the power to order Jesus to be executed. Pilate felt certain the decision was his. Both were wrong. All the details about the death of Jesus had been orchestrated long before this mock trial. (See John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32.)

Jesus warned His disciples that the same kinds of people who hated Him would persecute them. Opposition should not surprise or discourage us. Seeing Jesus's response to unfair cruelty can encourage us when confronted by unjust treatment.

### Why would the Jewish leaders be so eager to get rid of Jesus?

---

---

## KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. (See Isaiah 53:9; 1 John 3:5.)

### THE TRIAL (JOHN 18:33-38a)

<sup>33</sup> Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? <sup>35</sup> Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? <sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. <sup>37</sup> Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. <sup>38a</sup> Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

### VERSE 33

When the wise men arrived from the east, they appeared before Herod and asked, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him” (Matt. 2:2). Decades later, Pilate saw standing before him this bound Galilean. Nothing about the prisoner’s appearance indicated He was a threat. No army stood ready to protect Him. He had no royal robes, crown, or jewelry. One can almost hear the disbelief in Pilate’s voice. In the Greek text the “you” is emphatic: *You? Are you the king of the Jews?*

How Pilate came to associate the title ***King of the Jews*** with Jesus is unclear. He may have seen the crowds cheering as Jesus entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey a few days earlier: “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord” (John 12:13). Or it may have been sarcasm.

**BIBLE SKILL: *Compare similar situations.***

Compare Jesus's interaction with Pilate to Paul's interaction with the Athenians (Acts 17:16-34). What issues are similar in the two exchanges? How do the key points made in both settings compare? Write a short statement expressing how you might respond to someone who denies the truth of Christ and His gospel.

---

---

---

---

**VERSES 34-35**

Before answering Pilate's question, Jesus asked for clarification. If Pilate was asking this on his own, that meant he was concerned Jesus was trying to establish Himself as a political king. If this were the case, Jesus would have been guilty of insurrection and would have been a threat to Rome. The answer to this question would have been "No." If the question, though, had come from something the religious leaders had reported, then the question was religious in nature: "Are you the Messianic King of Israel?" The answer to this question would have been "Yes."

Pilate responded with contempt. Not being a Jew, Pilate had no interest in the charges this religious mob was hurling at Jesus. He clearly saw that Jesus was not a political threat. Jesus must have done something, though, to draw these people's ire and cause them to hand Jesus over to him—hence, the question, ***what hast thou done?***

**VERSES 36-38a**

Jesus responded to Pilate's first question, "Are you the King of the Jews?" by explaining how His ***kingdom*** was different. His kingdom was ***not of this world*** and posed no threat to Rome. Jesus had explained earlier in His ministry that He is not of this

world and that He is from above—having come down from heaven (see John 6:41; 8:23). His kingship likewise was not from here. It, therefore, would not have to be defended like other earthly kingdoms.

Evidently the only word that caught Pilate's ear was *kingdom*. Not having fully grasped what Jesus was saying, he pressed further: **Art thou a king then?** Jesus did not deny He was a king.

Having said what His kingdom was not (v. 36), Jesus next explained the nature of what His kingdom was. He stated He was born to be a king. This, the only direct mention of Christ's birth in John's Gospel, clearly connects His coming to earth with His mission—**witness unto the truth**. This echoes the earlier statement Jesus made to His disciples, that He is the way, the truth, and the life (14:6).

This *truth* had nothing to do with merely acquiring additional knowledge. He came to reveal the truth about God's nature, about salvation, and grace. Those who are **of the truth** are those who listen to His voice (see John 10:27). This echoed what Jesus earlier said to the Jewish leaders: "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (8:47). Implied in what Jesus said to Pilate was a call to self-examination: "Pilate, are you listening to my voice? Are you part of the truth?"

Rather than catch what Jesus was saying, Pilate responded with a cynical philosophical question, **What is truth?** He had completely missed the implication of what Jesus said. Additionally, he revealed that he had no concept of what truth really is.

Believers can confidently proclaim Jesus bore no guilt. None of His accusers could get their stories straight. Christ faced the cross, not for anything He did, but for our sins. Only a sinless Savior could bear our guilt and die in our place.

### How did Jesus's response to Pilate point to His innocence?

---

## THE TRADE (JOHN 18:38b-40)

<sup>38b</sup>And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all. <sup>39</sup> But ye have a

**custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? <sup>40</sup> Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.**

#### **VERSES 38b-40**

Having heard nothing from Jesus that seemed to be a threat to the Roman Empire, Pilate went back outside to report his verdict to the Jews. He said he found *no fault* in Jesus.

Implied in Pilate's report was the possibility that although he found nothing to charge Jesus with, the Jews might still have grounds for an indictment—an offense that would allow them to judge Jesus according to their law (see v. 31). Pilate thus offered to release Jesus, the King of the Jews, to them, in keeping with Jewish tradition. During the intertestamental period, the Jews had begun this practice of releasing a prisoner at Passover. The Romans, having taken control of the land, continued the practice as a gesture of goodwill.

The crowd rejected Pilate's offer. Mark explained what prompted their decision: "the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them" (15:11). John referred to **•Barabbas** as a **robber**. The Greek word can refer to a robber, outlaw, or revolutionary. Other texts refer to him as a notorious prisoner (Matt. 27:16) and a murderer (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19; Acts 3:14).

The crowd, having been worked up into a frenzy, demanded *Barabbas* to be released from prison and Jesus to be released to them. Barabbas could say, "This man Jesus died the death I should have died. He died in my place." We who are followers of Jesus know this truth equally applies to us as well.

The Jewish leaders' agenda was to destroy Jesus at all costs. Some people today still reject Jesus regardless of the facts. To acknowledge Him as God's Son would mean admission of their sin. Rather than repent and be forgiven, they prefer to continue living as they choose, even though the path they walk leads to judgment and death.

**How should we characterize Pilate's attempt to release Jesus?  
Why were the people so easily swayed to follow the Jewish leaders?**

---

# APPLY THE TEXT

- Followers of Jesus should expect false accusations to be made against them.
- Believers can confidently proclaim Jesus is without guilt.
- Some people reject Jesus regardless of the facts.

**Discuss with the group principles for engaging others who are unsure of or hostile toward the truth of Jesus. What communication practices did Jesus demonstrate when dialoguing with Pilate? How can the group help each other follow the example set by Jesus when encountering questions about Jesus?**

---

---

**List ways people today commonly misinterpret or misrepresent facts about Jesus. What can you point to from this study that counters the items you listed? With whom should you speak to and address the misinterpretations that you hear most often?**

---

---

## PRAYER NEEDS

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# *It Is Finished*

Jesus provided for our redemption through His death on the cross.

## **JOHN 19:17-30**

Some die in hospitals, while others die at home. Some have long illnesses, while others die from sudden accidents. While some family members are relieved that the pain and suffering has ended, none really want to let go. Each life is precious and, to one degree or another, seems unfinished. This was not the case when Jesus died. His work of atonement was complete through His death.

**On what types of unfinished business might a person focus if given a terminal diagnosis?**

---

---

---

# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **JOHN 19:16-42**

“They took Jesus, and led him away” (John 19:16). That simple statement envelopes the scene of Jesus carrying His cross toward Golgotha (v. 17). The Synoptic Gospels relate how soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to take the cross part of the way to Calvary (Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). Although not specified in Scripture, weakened by blood loss, Jesus likely tumbled beneath the weight of the cross. At that point, the guards forced the Cyrenian to carry the burden as he followed Jesus.

John states, “they crucified him” (v. 18). His hands and feet were nailed to the cross. Humiliating voices jeered at Him from passersby. Soldiers laughed as they divided His garments and gambled for His tunic. Pilate had a board placed above Jesus stating in three languages: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” Although the priests objected to the language, Pilate refused to change the wording. As far as he was concerned, this was their king.

Jesus’s mother and other women stood nearby. No one else from Jesus’s immediate family came to witness the horrible sight. Seeing His mother and His beloved disciple, Jesus placed Mary into John’s care.

After crying, “It is finished,” Jesus surrendered His spirit. Even in death, He was no victim. With Pilate’s permission, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took Jesus’s body down from the cross. These members of the Jewish Sanhedrin had been secret followers of Jesus. After His sacrifice, they would remain quiet no longer. Because the Sabbath was fast approaching, they hastily prepared Jesus’s body with spices and wrappings and buried Him in Joseph’s newly-hewn tomb (Matt. 27:57-60). Neither Joseph nor Nicodemus anticipated what would happen just three days later.

**As you read John 19:17-30 in your Bible, identify the different people and groups that were present at the cross. How does their presence impact John’s account of the events that took place during Jesus’s crucifixion?**

---

---

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## RAISED (JOHN 19:17-22)

<sup>17</sup> And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: <sup>18</sup> Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. <sup>19</sup> And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was **JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS**. <sup>20</sup> This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. <sup>21</sup> Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. <sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

### VERSES 17-18

Jesus carried *his* own **cross**. Carrying the horizontal beam (Latin, *patibulum*) was part of the punishment. The other Gospels state that Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the beam for Jesus, who was at the point of collapse (Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). The exhaustion came from the flogging Jesus had endured. Having someone carry the *patibulum* was not because of compassion; the Romans wanted to make sure the criminal did not die before he reached the crucifixion site. Doing so would have been anticlimactic for the crowd and less painful for the condemned.

Being crucified between two criminals (Mark 15:27), Jesus was fulfilling what Isaiah had foretold some 800 years earlier, He “was numbered with the transgressors” (Isa. 53:12).

### VERSES 19-22

Romans commonly prepared a tablet or placard detailing the offender’s crimes; they wanted to discourage others from committing the same felonies. The sign, typically written in multiple languages, was either hung from the neck of the condemned person or carried by someone who accompanied the criminal. Once all were in place, the sign was affixed to the cross. The sign Pilate prepared for Jesus was different from what was expected; it listed no crimes. Instead, it simply read, **JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS**.

When the Jews had brought Jesus to Pilate, they claimed He had said He was “a King” (Luke 23:2). However, Jesus did not make this claim (see John 18:34-37).

The sign was written in **Hebrew**, the language commonly spoken by Jews; **Latin**, the official language of the Roman military; and **Greek**, the shared language Jews and Gentiles spoke throughout the Empire. Pilate’s refusing to change the sign as **the chief priests** requested was his way of mocking the Jews, as if he were saying, “You think you are such a powerful people? Here, this dying rebel from the insignificant village of Nazareth is the king you deserve.”

Pilate’s placard contained more truth than he realized, though. Jesus was and is King of kings and the Lord of lords. Pilate had unwittingly refused to change the truth into a lie.

### **Why do some want to discredit the claims of Jesus?**

---

---

---

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The word *Golgotha* means “skull” in the Aramaic and Hebrew languages. Its Latin name was Calvary. Scholars point to two modern sites that may have been ancient Golgotha, but no location is definite. At one possible site, the topography actually gives the appearance of a ghoulish grin.

#### **PLANNED** (JOHN 19:23-24)

**<sup>23</sup> Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. <sup>24</sup> They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.**

## VERSES 23-24

Just as Pilate unwittingly declared the truth with his sign, the soldiers unknowingly fulfilled Old Testament prophecy with their actions at the foot of the cross. Psalm 22:18 states, “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”

---

### **BIBLE SKILL:** *Connect Old Testament prophecy to New Testament fulfillment.*

Read Psalm 22. Jot down elements of the Psalm that were fulfilled with Jesus’s crucifixion. Compare Jesus’s experience with the description of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. Which elements in Psalm and Isaiah overlap? How do these passages demonstrate prophetic knowledge of what would happen at Golgotha?

---

---

---

---

The **coat** or tunic Jesus wore would have been like a long, linen t-shirt that came down to or just below the knee. The tunic was **without seam**. This detail emphasizes the fact it was not made of two materials that had been stitched together. The Old Testament prohibited combining materials when making clothes (Lev. 19:19). Rather than rip it into pieces, the soldiers cast lots to see who would get it. The one-piece tunic was also an allusion to clothing the Jewish High Priest wore. The robe of the priest’s ephod was made of one piece of cloth with “an hole in the top of it” and “a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent” (Ex. 28:32). Significantly, the seamless article of clothing was a reminder that Jesus is our ultimate High Priest (Heb. 4:15).

While the soldiers’ actions may seem to be a minor detail, it is a reminder that, in the death of Jesus, nothing was left to chance. The crucifixion’s every element was in keeping with God’s redemptive plan.

## Why was it important for John to point to Psalm 22 when recounting Jesus's crucifixion?

---

### HONORED (JOHN 19:25-27)

<sup>25</sup> Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

<sup>26</sup> When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! <sup>27</sup> Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

### VERSES 25-27

John identified four women present at the crucifixion. Two are mentioned only here in his Gospel: one is Mary's **sister**, who is not identified by name. Matthew stated, "the mother of Zebedee's children" was present (Matt. 27:56). She was the mother of James and John. Mark stated a woman named Salome was present (Mark 15:40). Some have suggested that Salome was Zebedee's wife and Mary's sister. If this is accurate—and there is no way to be certain—Jesus would have been James's and John's cousin. This close connection might explain why John was **the disciple** Jesus **loved**. The second woman named only here is **Mary the wife of •Cleophas** (Clopas). Luke mentioned one of the two who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection was named Cleopas (Luke 24:18). Whether these two names represent the same person is unclear.

John identified two other women at the cross. The first was Mary, the mother of Jesus. As he had done elsewhere in his Gospel (see John 2:1-3,5,12; 6:42), John did not identify her by name; he simply referred to her as **his mother**. The second woman was **Mary Magdalene**, out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons (Mark 16:9). Jesus continued to show kindness even in the moment of intense personal suffering. He commended the care of His mother to the disciple whom He loved, meaning John, the writer of this Gospel.

Several details stand out in this scene. First, Jesus knew and obeyed both civil and religious law. The statement commending

Mary's care to John followed a form known as a testamentary disposition—the legal transference of responsibility that occurs after a person's death. Details of such transference are often given in a last will and testament. Roman law allowed someone to make such a declaration even from a cross. Jesus was also following Jewish law, which gave Him, as the oldest son, responsibility to provide protection for His mother, who was likely widowed.

Second, Jesus was obedient to the Father, even to His last breath. In providing for Mary's care, He followed the commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Ex. 20:12).

Third, Jesus entrusted His mother's care to the beloved disciple rather than His half-brothers who had not yet placed their faith in Him or become part of His mission. Jesus was ensuring no loose ends remained after His death.

Fourth, in taking Mary into his home, John was doing more than providing a roof over her head. From *that hour* forward, he assumed responsibility of providing care for her.

**How does Jesus caring for His mother give us a practical model for honoring our parents?**

---

---

## **FINISHED** (JOHN 19:28-30)

**<sup>28</sup> After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. <sup>29</sup> Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup> When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.**

### **VERSES 28-30**

The Greek word translated *accomplished* carried the idea of completing a task or paying a debt. Only the Son of God could complete what was necessary for our forgiveness. Jesus understood one prophetic word was yet to be *fulfilled*. In stating He was thirsty, Jesus not only spotlighted His humanity but also fulfilled Psalm 69:3,20-21.

The drink the soldiers gave Jesus was a watered-down vinegar or a cheap wine. No soldier would dare share his cup with a crucified criminal. Thus, they attached a sponge to a branch, dipped it in the sour drink, and held it up to His mouth.

The soldiers' behavior was not one of compassion but of contempt and ridicule. Communal latrines were common in the first century. The "toilet paper" of the day was a sponge on a stick, which the user would dip in water that ran through a gutter near his feet. Even if the sponge had never actually been used for that purpose, the visual of holding it up to the parched lips of this crucified rebel would have elicited mocking laughter from those who stood nearby.

Earlier, we looked at Psalm 22:18, which foreshadowed the soldiers dividing among themselves Jesus's clothing. Psalm 22 begins with David's cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (v. 1). It continues, "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, . . . the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet" (vv. 7,16). The psalm closes with "a seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this" (vv. 30-31). That final phrase "he hath done this" is actually one word in Hebrew, which can be translated as "finished."

Jesus said, ***It is finished***. The penalty for sin had been paid. Humanity's redemption comes only through faith in Jesus. If there were any other way for us to be saved, Jesus would not have died on the cross. By His atonement we can be reconciled to God.

**How would you characterize Jesus's final declaration from the cross?**

---

---

---

### **KEY DOCTRINE:** *Justification*

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. (See Genesis 15:6; Romans 5:1.)

# APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers can declare Jesus as King.
- Jesus’s death was a part of God’s redemptive plan.
- Believers are to follow Jesus’s example of showing compassion to family.
- Humanity’s redemption comes only through faith in Jesus.

**Discuss as a group how the crucifixion as an essential element in God’s redemption plan impacts the life of the group. Create a list of people who may not know or understand the necessity of the crucifixion. What can the group do to help others know and understand this reality?**

---

---

**List concrete ways you demonstrate that Jesus is your King. Are there areas in which you still reign? What keeps you from surrendering those areas to Him fully? What actions do you need to take to overcome the reasons you identified?**

---

---

## PRAYER NEEDS

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



# *Reach Out Your Hand*

Believers can be confident that Jesus is resurrected.

## **JOHN 20:19-29**

Robert Ripley was a sports columnist who, during a slow sports news day, wrote an article about unusual competitions and called it “Champs and Chumps.” In time, oddities from around the world took on a new name, “Ripley’s Believe It or Not.” We are fascinated by things that seem unbelievable or out of the ordinary. Some things may test what we think to be possible until we see the evidence. Even Jesus’s closest followers had questions about His resurrection until they saw the evidence.

**What is the most unbelievable thing you have ever seen?**

---

---

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## JOHN 20:19-31

Throughout John's Gospel we find a connection between seeing and believing. John the Baptist declared that he had seen and testified that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:33-34). At a wedding in Cana where Jesus turned water to wine, we are told that the disciples believed as a result of seeing the miracle (2:11). After giving a blind man sight, the formerly blind man professed his belief in Jesus (9:38). After raising Lazarus, John tells us that many Jews saw Lazarus and believed in Jesus (11:45). This theme finds its culmination in Jesus showing His scars after His resurrection.

Fearful of Jewish reprisals, the disciples hid behind locked doors, possibly in the same upper room where they celebrated the Passover. They did not realize the significance of it being the third day since Jesus's crucifixion. Although Jesus repeatedly told them He would rise on that day, they could not connect His promise with their reality—until Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst.

Jesus showed them His scars and ate with them. They needed complete confidence that Jesus had triumphed over the grave if they were to carry out the mission He was about to give them.

Thomas was not present at this gathering. When he returned and heard his companions' testimonies, he said he would have to place his fingers into the nail prints of Jesus's hands and put his hand into the Lord's side before he could believe. Thomas could not comprehend this supernatural reality without hard evidence.

Thomas continued in his despondency for a week. As suddenly as His previous appearance, Jesus stood among the disciples again. He invited Thomas to do exactly what he had requested—to put his finger into Jesus's scars. Thomas fell at Jesus's feet and acknowledged Him as Lord and God. He saw and believed. Jesus commended persons who could believe even what they had not seen.

**As you read John 20:19-29 in your Bible, look for the connection between seeing and believing. How did seeing the risen Christ impact people's belief that He was indeed the Savior?**

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## COMMISSIONED (JOHN 20:19-23)

<sup>19</sup> Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. <sup>20</sup> And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: <sup>23</sup> Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

## VERSES 19-20

Each of the four Gospel writers specified the women arrived early morning on the **first day of the week** and found the tomb empty. John wanted his readers to know what happened several hours later that same day. Because of what happened that morning, the *first day of the week* would come to be known as “the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10).

Despite Peter and John’s visiting the empty tomb and Mary Magdalene’s telling the disciples she had seen and spoken with the Lord, the disciples were still fearful. Knowing the role **the Jews** played in the crucifixion, the disciples were afraid of what they might do to them. Thus, they were behind locked doors.

Rather than hearing temple police banging on the doors, they heard a familiar voice: **Peace be unto you**. Jesus, who miraculously passed through grave clothes, evidently passed through the walls and **stood in the midst** of them. The disciples thought they were seeing a ghost (Luke 24:37). Jesus showed them **his hands and his side**. Although John had been the only disciple to stand at the foot of the cross, the others had certainly heard details about the crucifixion. Luke reported that Jesus “shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3). The wounds offered such proof.

When teaching His disciples during the Passover supper a few days earlier, Jesus had foretold, “but I will see you again, and your

heart shall rejoice” (John 16:22). This was what happened; upon seeing the Lord alive, ***then were the disciples glad.***

**How does the joy of knowing Jesus is resurrected motivate believers to tell others about Him?**

---

---

### VERSES 21-23

During the Passover meal, Jesus foretold details about the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14–16). He said, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (15:26-27). Those words were partially fulfilled in these verses. Just as the Father had ***sent*** Jesus to minister and speak in His name, Jesus would now ***send*** His disciples to do the same.

Having commissioned His disciples, Jesus ***breathed*** on them and spoke of their receiving ***the Holy Ghost***, an event that would occur in a few weeks at Pentecost. By breathing on His disciples, Jesus was providing a visible preview of the Spirit’s arrival. He was also affirming His divinity by echoing what the Father had done after creating man from dust: God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). The creation of the church would likewise occur because of the Spirit of God filling believers (Acts 2:1-47).

---

### **KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Holy Spirit***

At the moment of regeneration, the Holy Spirit baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 12:13; Hebrews 5:9.)

The Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead still transforms people’s lives today and equips believers for Christ’s work and service. Apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

When Jesus spoke of sins being *remitted* or *retained* by His disciples, He used legal terms that referred to a judge's ability to discern the legitimacy of a person's behavior. The question for the judge to determine was whether a person was innocent or merely acting innocent. In the same way, Jesus was saying His followers could, based on someone's behavior, declare that person had truly repented and thus been forgiven—or had not.

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Identify the imagery in a verse or passage and discover what it communicates.*

Review a Bible dictionary article on the term “breath.” Notice passages identified in the article that point to God's breath and His sovereignty over life. How does the article give you a deeper understanding of Jesus breathing on the disciples in John 20:22? What does Jesus breathing on them communicate about the nature and role of the Holy Spirit?

---

---

---

**DEMANDS** (JOHN 20:24-25)

**<sup>24</sup> But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.**

**VERSES 24-25**

**Thomas** had demonstrated great loyalty to Jesus by saying he was willing to die for Him if necessary (11:1-16). Later, when Jesus told His disciples He was going away to prepare a place for them, Thomas, not wanting to be separated from Jesus, asked where He was going and how they too could get there (14:1-6). These snapshots highlight Thomas's devotion to Jesus.

For some unspecified reason, Thomas was not present when Jesus appeared to the disciples behind locked doors. When the disciples later saw Thomas, they proclaimed: ***We have seen the Lord.*** The Greek verb tense indicates that the disciples kept telling him.

Thomas wanted confirmation. He would ***not believe*** unless he could see and touch Jesus's wounds. Before criticizing Thomas, we should recall two things. First, when Jesus appeared behind locked doors, He voluntarily showed the disciples His hands and side (20:20). Second, "He must be alive" was not people's first thought. Instead, confusion and skepticism were the common reactions (see 20:13,15).

After realizing she was seeing the resurrected Christ and touching Him, Mary Magdalene reported her experiences to the disciples; yet, "when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not" (Mark 16:11). Additionally, when the group of women who had been at the empty tomb told the disciples what they had seen, their "words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke 24:11). Not only did the disciples not believe what they heard, some even doubted what they saw. Jesus later appeared to them on a mountain in Galilee. "When they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted" (Matt 28:17). Thomas was evidently no more skeptical than anyone else had been. He likely just wanted to verify the report personally.

**What kind of evidence might people demand prior to believing in Jesus?**

---

---

## **BELIEVED** (JOHN 20:26-29)

**<sup>26</sup> And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. <sup>27</sup> Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. <sup>28</sup> And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. <sup>29</sup> Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.**

## VERSE 26

This encounter occurred *after eight days*. Thomas continued in his comfortless resolution that Jesus was dead. He dared not hope against hope that the others were right. His doubt did not discourage his fellow disciples. They continued to share meals and fellowship with Thomas, but they did so with the joy of having seen the Lord.

By specifying *again his disciples were within*, John infers that they had gained courage to venture away from the safety of their seclusion. It was much like the disciples had experienced on the evening of the resurrection, except Thomas was present. We do not know why Jesus stayed away for seven days. But again, He appeared.

The disciples still made sure *the doors* were *shut*. They remained concerned for their safety. A greater reason for John's observation was that Jesus did not enter the room through the normal manner. As He did the previous week, Jesus *came* and *stood in the midst*. He greeted them in the usual way, *Peace be unto you*.

Jesus promised His disciples a peace unlike what the world gives. It would be marked by an absence of trouble and fear. This peace would endure even amid suffering; it was possible because Christ conquered evil in the world (John 14:27; 16:33).

## VERSES 27-29

Jesus focused His attention on Thomas. He addressed Thomas's exact, earlier words and instructed him to do what Thomas had declared—to see and touch His wounds. The instructions were not a rebuke but a compassionate invitation for the apostle to satisfy his curiosity.

John gave no indication of what Thomas's actions were. Did he put his finger in the wounds in His hands? Did he look at the scars or put his hand into wound the soldier made with his spear? What we do know is that Thomas followed the final instruction Jesus gave: *be not faithless, but believing*. The apostle's verbal response was an exclamation of faith and personal conviction: *My Lord and my God*.

John's Gospel began with the declaration referring to Jesus, "the Word was God" (1:1). The declaration comes full circle in Thomas's words near the end of this Gospel. The risen Christ was indeed Thomas's Lord and God.

The Jews' daily prayer, the *Shema*, declares, "The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut. 6:4). Thomas's testimony attributed both titles

to Jesus—Lord and God. Jews would have recognized Thomas’s pronouncement as affirming Christ’s divinity and thus would have been offended by his words. Romans would have also been offended by Thomas’s statement. Romans, beginning with Julius Caesar (ruled 49-44 BC), claimed their emperors were divine. Christians, though, would make no such declaration for him or any other Roman emperor.

---

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The Romans built temples throughout the Empire in honor of the emperors. There, priests erected statues of the emperors, sang hymns praising their virtues, and lit candles and incense as acts of worship. John likely penned his Gospel during Emperor Domitian’s reign (AD 81-96). Domitian claimed for himself a title almost identical to Thomas’s declaration, “Our Lord and God.”

Thomas’s words were a testimony about his personal relationship with Jesus, *My Lord and my God*. Jesus, though, looked beyond that moment to a time when no tangible evidence would be available to prove His resurrection. He proclaimed those who do not see and **yet have believed** are **blessed**.

To be *blessed* does not mean a person is merely happy or content; it also indicates God has accepted the individual. The declaration Jesus made applied not only to those who would come to faith because they heard the witness of Thomas and the other disciples, it also referred to future generations of Jews and Gentiles who, even centuries later, would come to believe without seeing. Those who received that witness would be blessed. The great news is this promise still applies today. As we believe that witness, may we too respond by proclaiming in faith, “My Lord and my God!”

**How does Jesus address people’s doubts about Him today?**

---

---



## 13

# *Do You Love Me?*

Believers are offered God's grace even when they fail.

## JOHN 21:15-23

Asking someone if they love us can be a dangerous question. We may hear the right answer while their body language communicates something different. They may view love differently than we do or to a different degree than what we had hoped. Even though this may be a dangerous question, it is an important question so we can know the potential for that relationship. Jesus asked Peter this question to help Peter reflect on his future.

**What makes asking someone about their love for you dangerous?**

---

---

---

# UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

## **JOHN 21:1-25**

Following their encounters with the risen Jesus in Jerusalem, the disciples traveled northward to the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee). Shortly after His resurrection, Jesus sent a message with the women who saw Him. He wanted the disciples to go on to Galilee where He would join them (Matt. 28:10).

As they waited for Jesus, several of them joined Peter who went fishing. One wonders if Peter wanted to return to his former occupation as a commercial fisherman. Peter was tired emotionally, physically, and spiritually. His flight to the familiar was a natural reaction to the stress he had been experiencing.

Jesus had other plans. He purposefully chose this site to confront the disciples with His commission. After they fished all night without catching anything, Jesus appeared to them from the shore. At first, they did not recognize Him. Heeding His instructions, they cast their nets and caught a huge harvest of fish. This event mirrored Peter's initial experience with Jesus immediately prior to Jesus's call (Luke 5:1-11).

Realizing this was Jesus, Peter swam to shore while the others brought along the boat and fish-laden nets. Jesus already had a fire going and invited them to join Him for breakfast. Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. Peter was grieved because he recognized the allusion to the three times that he had denied Jesus. Jesus was not trying to hurt Peter but to challenge him with a bigger goal in life.

When Jesus first met Peter, He promised to make him a fisher of men. Jesus linked love for Him with service to His flock. We cannot avoid the connection between love for Jesus and serving Him by ministering in His name.

**As you read John 21:15-23 in your Bible, look for evidence that Jesus was making sure Simon Peter was fully restored. Why was Peter's restoration so important to Jesus?**

---

---

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## DO YOU? (JOHN 21:15-17)

<sup>15</sup> So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. <sup>16</sup> He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. <sup>17</sup> He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

## VERSES 15-17

At an unspecified time after the resurrection, **Simon Peter** and six other disciples returned to the Sea of Galilee and fished through the night (John 21:1-3). Fishing at night was common practice. Any fish caught could be taken to market early and sold in the morning. On this night, the fishermen had no success; they pulled up empty nets.

Standing on the shore, Jesus called out and told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. When they did, the nets filled with large fish. Once the disciples were on shore, Jesus prepared over a charcoal fire a breakfast of bread and fish for them.

One must wonder if Simon Peter, standing next to the charcoal fire that morning, thought back to the night outside the palace of the high priest when he had stood next to a charcoal fire. That night was marked with disappointment and denial. This, though, was a time for reconciliation and restoration.

After they had eaten, Jesus directed His attention to Peter. He addressed him as **Simon, son of Jonas**. *Simon* was his given name. Jesus had nicknamed him “Peter,” which translates in Greek as “Rock”—an allusion to his strength and stability. When Jesus needed to correct or warn him, though, He called him “Simon” (see Luke 22:31).

What did Jesus mean when He asked, **lovest thou me more than these?** What is the *these*? Some believe Jesus was asking Peter if

he loved Him more than he did his previous occupation of fishing. Others believe Jesus was asking if Peter loved Him more than he loved his fellow disciples. Still others believe Jesus was asking Peter if he loved Him more than the other disciples loved Jesus. Loving Jesus more than anything and anyone else was to be essential in the work He was calling Peter to do.

**What might a person point to as proof that they love Jesus?**

---

---

**BIBLE SKILL:** *Notice repeated words or phrases in a Bible passage.*

Look up selected passages that use *agape*: John 13:34; 17:26; 1 Corinthians 13:8; and 1 John 4:19. Note which passages refer to love relating to God and love relating to people. Compare what you find to selected passages that use *phileo*: Matthew 10:37; John 5:20; 16:27; and James 4:4. Make notations about use of the term love. How does the use of these words help us understand what Jesus was communicating to Peter in John 21?

---

---

---

---

In these verses are a couple of pairs of words that are especially instructive. The first pair of words are translated into English as **lovest** and **love**. The Greek text uses two words for love. First is *agapao*, which is the highest form of love (see John 3:16; 1 Cor. 13). The second Greek term is *phileo*, which denotes a friendship. It is the root for the word Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. Although the words' meanings and their uses in the New Testament overlap, John clarifies the difference in this conversation.

The first two times, Jesus asked, “Do you *agapao* me?” Both times, Peter, knowing how he had denied knowing Jesus, replied, “You know that I *phileo* you.” In the third questioning, Jesus used the verb Peter used and asked, “Do you *phileo* me?” Recognizing Jesus knew his heart, Peter replied, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I *phileo* you.” At that moment, it was the best Peter felt he could sincerely confess; there was no need to hide his sense of inadequacy from Jesus.

The second pair of words are **feed** and **feed** (two different words in Greek). In the first and third exchange, Jesus commanded Peter to *feed* His flock. The Greek verb carries the idea of the shepherd consistently feeding and providing pasture for his flock. In the second exchange, Jesus commanded Peter to *feed* His sheep. This verb carried the idea of continually providing food plus caring for the sheep’s physical and even intangible needs, such as security and protection. This verb was used to describe the coming Messiah who would shepherd God’s people (Matt. 2:6). It was also the instruction Peter later gave to those who would serve as pastors, “Feed the flock of God which is among you” (1 Pet. 5:2). Together, feeding and shepherding encompassed all duties related to providing care for sheep.

The encounter showed that although Peter may have turned his back on Jesus, Jesus had not turned His back on Peter. Rather than rebuke and condemn Peter, Jesus was ready to restore and commission him for kingdom work. The scene offers hope; the fact we have failed does not mean we are finished.

**Why do we easily think that if we have faltered then the Lord is no longer able to use us?**

---

## **WILL YOU?** (JOHN 21:18-19)

**<sup>18</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. <sup>19</sup> This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.**

## VERSES 18-19

Following Jesus is not without cost. When Peter made his brash commitment at the Passover meal, he overestimated his ability to stand firm. Instead of being faithful to Jesus even if it cost his life, Peter denied Him three times. Having renewed Peter's profession of love, Jesus helped Peter understand the implications of following Him.

These verses contain a prophecy concerning Peter's death as a martyr. Jesus spoke in contrasts. In his youth, Peter had control over his own actions; later in life, he would not. In his youth, Peter walked where he wanted to go; in old age, someone else would carry him where he did not want to go. The phrase ***stretch forth thy hands*** might seem to apply to an older man who needed assistance and thus stretched out his hands so someone could help dress him. Verse 19, though, shows this interpretation is unacceptable.

The image of Peter stretching out his hands likely referred to crucifixion. The terms reflect practices related to Roman crucifixion. On a cross, the piece of wood to which the criminal's hands and arms were attached was called a *patibulum*. Once the person had been convicted and sentenced to be crucified, Roman soldiers would lay the *patibulum* across his shoulders and attach his outstretched arms with a rope. The criminal then had to carry the *patibulum* to his own execution site. Upon arrival, the person's outstretched arms remained tied, or the person's wrists might be nailed to the *patibulum* before the cross was stood upright.

Thus, the words Jesus spoke in verse 18 depicted ***what*** kind of ***death*** Peter would experience; he would be crucified. Jesus knew that even in death, Peter would ***glorify God***. By the time John penned these words, the prophetic words Jesus had spoken had been fulfilled.

---

### DID YOU KNOW?

Clement, bishop of the church in Rome at the end of the first century, stated that Peter died as a martyr at the hands of Nero. Tertullian, an early Christian theologian, said Peter died by crucifixion. Eusebius, the early church historian, claimed Peter requested to be crucified upside down because he deemed himself unworthy to die in the same way Jesus did. This report, though, is not substantiated.

When Jesus initially called His disciples, He did so with the simple command, **Follow me** (see John 1:43). Jesus issued the call to Peter again. Peter would begin to follow anew—but this time as a fully forgiven and restored disciple of the risen Christ.

**Would knowing you would be a martyr for your faith in Jesus cause joy or anxiety? Explain.**

---

---

---

### KEY DOCTRINE: *God*

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.  
(See Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 John 2:4-6.)

## WHAT ABOUT YOU . . . ? (JOHN 21:20-23)

<sup>20</sup> Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? <sup>21</sup> Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? <sup>22</sup> Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. <sup>23</sup> Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

### VERSES 20-21

John never named himself in his Gospel. One of the ways he identified himself was by calling himself **the disciple whom Jesus loved** (see 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7). He had been next to Jesus at the Passover supper. Reclining as they did during meals, this meant when John spoke to Jesus, he **leaned** against Him (13:23).

Peter, having absorbed what Jesus said about his martyrdom, became concerned about what would happen to John. For whatever reason, John was **following** them, suggesting that Jesus and Peter had walked away from the group. His proximity attracted Peter's attention.

Peter thus asked, **Lord, and what shall this man do?** He wanted to know how John's life would end; would he also face martyrdom? Sometimes when we feel on the spot, it's tempting to shift the focus to someone else. Peter had been given his marching orders, but Jesus said nothing about John or the other disciples.

### **What are the dangers of comparing ourselves to other believers?**

---

---

#### **VERSES 22-23**

Jesus responded to Peter's curiosity with a mild rebuke. He stated that if He desired John to live until He returned, that was not Peter's concern. He had already explained what Peter's future was to be. Thus, Peter did not need to compare himself with John or to focus on John's fate or future but his own.

The verb Jesus used was both singular and emphatic—**follow thou me**. Jesus was not going to allow Peter to change the subject; following Him was to be the single-minded emphasis for Peter's future. The lesson applies to us today. We cannot spend our energies comparing ourselves to other believers and how the Lord may be using their lives in contrast to our own.

Peter, active in establishing the early church, did die as a martyr during the reign of Nero—likely about AD 65. John, however, lived well into his nineties. In his senior years, John penned his Gospel, three epistles, and the book of Revelation. God had different courses for these two men's lives. Comparing themselves with each other would be pointless, and Jesus knew that.

Ultimately, John died like any other man, but first he fulfilled Jesus's purpose in his life, just like Peter was commanded to do. How others interpret God's call remains between them and the Lord. We must focus on Christ's purpose for us.

### **How do we stay focused on Jesus's call in our life?**

---

---



# What Jesus Taught About Love



Jesus falling beneath the cross engraving by Gustave Doré—Original engraving from *The Dore Gallery*, Edmund Ollier 1870.

Love is a powerful biblical theme throughout the Old and New Testaments. In Jesus’s life and teaching, though, the biblical concept of love reached its highest pinnacle of significance. In Jesus we find a uniqueness to love’s meaning and impact that, while tied to the Old Testament, transcends both the secular and spiritual concepts we find there.

Interestingly, the Gospels use the Greek words translated

“love” as verbs more than nouns. The two Greek verbs for love, *agapao* and *phileo*, occur 83 times, compared to only 9 times for the noun *agape*. In John’s Gospel alone the verbs occur 49 times to only 7 times for the noun. This higher frequency of using verbs over nouns in the Gospels seems to suggest a greater stress on the active element of love.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, a clear preference for *agapao* over *phileo* exists in the Gospels.<sup>2</sup> While some scholars view these two verbs as virtually synonymous and often used interchangeably, other commentators see a distinction between the words. For example the Greek scholar W. E. Vine defined *agapao* as expressing God’s “deep and constant love and interest” toward those who are unworthy of that love.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, he distinguished *phileo* as more nearly representing “tender affection.”<sup>4</sup> While the

debate remains unsettled, *agapao* appears to express love in at least one special sense, as God's unearned gift to man that finds its anchor in Jesus's self-giving sacrifice of love on the cross.

### ***Jesus's Unique Emphases***

Three emphases in Jesus's teaching about love stand out as unique. Each of these is grounded in John's Gospel.

*For All People*—Jesus taught that the reach of God's love includes all people. God demonstrated His love for them by sending His only-begotten Son into the world for their salvation (John 3:16).

*For His Followers*—A second unique way in which Jesus taught about love was through the love He demonstrated for the disciples. He modeled this love before them through His perfect obedience to the Father. He explained that Christian love expresses itself in implicit obedience to God's commands; the one who truly loves Jesus will express that love by obeying His commands and keeping His teachings (14:15,21,23).

*For Abiding*—A third theme Jesus taught about love emphasized His desire for the disciples to abide in His love. He stated this in the form of a

direct command: "continue ye in my love" (15:9). Jesus tied remaining in His love with keeping His commands (v. 10). The "commands" to which Jesus referred become folded into one core commandment in verse 12: they were to love one another as Christ had loved them. This single command is, in fact, a restatement of John 13:34-35, where Jesus told His disciples He was giving them a new commandment: to love one another. Obeying this command would identify them as Christ's followers (13:35). Their love for one another would distinguish them before the world and would validate their commitment to Jesus.

In both John 13:34-35 and 15:12-14, Jesus explained that the love the disciples have for one another was to be a reflection of how Jesus had loved them. In both texts the verb tense is significant. The texts use the present tense, indicating that the disciples' love for one another was to be a continuous, ongoing action. As Jesus had loved them, they were to love one another.

In a sense, Christ's followers continue the chain: the Father loves Jesus; Jesus loves the disciples; the disciples love one another without fail and without

end. Furthermore, by keeping the commandment to love each other, Jesus's followers bear the fruit He desires from them (15:8), the fruit of giving a strong witness to the world.

To this specific command for His followers to love their fellow believers, Jesus added two further commandments to love that find their basis in the Old Testament. The first command is directed toward God and the second focuses attention on the disciples' neighbors (Matt. 22:37-40). All Jews would have recognized Jesus's command to love God with one's heart, soul, and mind as the core of the Shema (see Deut. 6:4-5). It challenged persons of faith to love God supremely. Additionally, Jesus echoed Leviticus 19:18 when He told His disciples that they should love their neighbors selflessly. By linking these two commandments together, Jesus showed that all other commandments are summed up or contained in them, thereby making these two the greatest commandments of all.

### **Modern Applications**

We can discern from Jesus's teaching about love at least three implications for believers today. First, those of us who follow

Jesus Christ can demonstrate His love to a lost world by truly loving each other.

Second, we demonstrate our love for the Lord by obeying Him. Since Jesus modeled for us obedience to the Father, our obedience to God will become a model for others who are watching us.

Third, because of God's great love for the whole world, we should strive for a renewed commitment in our lives to share this love with unsaved people everywhere so they also may experience God's saving grace.

Love is a powerful biblical theme. In Jesus, we find the ultimate manifestation and embodiment of God's love. Jesus practiced selfless and sacrificial love throughout His life and in His atoning death. John, in his first epistle, explained believers' motivation for continuing in and expressing God's love: "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

1. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 497-98. In contrast, Paul used the noun *agape* more than twice as much as the verb *agapao*.

2. *Ibid.*; 62 times for *agapao* compared to 21 times for *phileo*.

3. "Love" in W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, vol. 3, in *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1981), 21.

4. *Ibid.*

This article originally appeared in the Spring 2015 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*.

# COMING **NEXT QUARTER**

---

## **JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS**

- Session 1*    **Prepares** • Jeremiah 1:4-19
- Session 2*    **Judges** • Jeremiah 2:1-13
- Session 3*    **Personal** • Jeremiah 7:1-15
- Session 4*    **Exclusive** • Jeremiah 12:1-13
- Session 5*    **Shapes** • Jeremiah 18:1-12
- Session 6*    **Rules** • Jeremiah 23:1-12
- Session 7*    **Present** • Jeremiah 29:4-14
- Session 8*    **Redeems** • Jeremiah 31:23-34
- Session 9*    **Worthy** • Jeremiah 35:5-19
- Session 10*    **Speaks** • Jeremiah 36:19-31
- Session 11*    **Trustworthy** • Jeremiah 42:7-22
- Session 12*    **Just** • Jeremiah 50:11-20; 33-34
- Session 13*    **Good** • Lamentations 3:19-33

JEREMIAH



## JOHN 12–21

The apostle John spent roughly 40 percent of his Gospel focusing on the week leading up to Jesus’s death and resurrection. That was part of John’s plan to help readers accept Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. In these chapters, we find Jesus teaching His disciples so much about being a Christ follower in a hostile world. Christians still need to understand and embrace those principles, which makes studying John 12–21 imperative.

**Lifeway** adults

[goexplorethebible.com](https://goexplorethebible.com)

RELIGION/Biblical Studies/Bible Study Guides

