

jahn
THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

Prepared by Joshua Webber
1ST Quarter 2024
www.wearesimplychristians.com

INTRODUCTION

The gospel of John was written “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). The text offers insight into the person of Jesus to grow your own faith, and it gives incredible insights to sharing your faith with others.

On Sundays in the first quarter, we will discuss the text of John and specifically what it reveals about Jesus. Each class will also have a “Faith Moment.” This question will be designed to reflect on an aspect of belief derived from each text.

On Wednesdays we will focus specifically on the individuals with whom Jesus interacts. The challenges these individuals must overcome to believe in Jesus represent the same challenges to faith in the world today. These classes will emphasize practically how to share your faith with the people in your life.

JOHN THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
	1. The Word Became Flesh	John 1:1-51
	2. Nathaniel: Sharing the Real Jesus	John 1:43-51
	3. The Road to Golgotha	John 2:1-3:36
	4. Nicodemus: Confronting the Religious Expert	John 3:1-21
	5. The Messiah is Coming	John 4:1-54
	6. Samaritan Woman: Engaging a Sinful Past	John 4:1-29, 39-42
	7. The Son and the Father	John 5:1-47
	8. Invalid: Hope for the Physically Sick	John 5:1-17
	9. The Bread of Life	John 6:1-71
	10. Crowds: Challenging Easy Faith	John 6:25-41
	11. Can This Be The Christ?	John 7:1-8:11
	12. Adulterous Woman: Engaging a Sinful Present	John 8:1-11
	13. The Light of the World	John 8:12-9:41
	14. Blind Man: Handling Family Rejection	John 9:1-41
	15. That They May Have Life	John 10:1-11:57
	16. Mary and Martha: Comforting the Grieving	John 11:17-36
	17. The Hour Has Come	John 12:1-50
	18. Authorities: Redirecting The Successful	John 12:42-43
	19. I Am Going	John 13:1-17:26
	20. All People: Loving as Evangelism	John 13:34-35
	21. King of the Jews	John 18:1-19:42
	22. Pilate: Sharing Truth in a Post-Truth World	John 18:33-38
	23. My Lord and My God	John 20:1-31
	24. Thomas: Valuing Doubt	John 20:19-29
	25. The Christ, the Son of God	John 20:30-21:25
	26. Peter: Trying Again	John 21:15-19

LESSON 1

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

TEXT: JOHN 1:1-51

F A I T H M O M E N T

From beginning to end, this will be a journey of faith. John writes, “That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” (John 20:31; 1:7, 6:29, 11:42, 17:20-21, 19:35 et al.). Those interacting with Jesus and grow in their faith must answer four questions concerning his life and teachings. As you read and encounter passages that challenge you, use the same questions to grow your own faith.

- How is this similar to what I already believe?
- How is it different from what I already believe?
- How many of the differences am I willing to accept?
- Does this answer a question or hope for which I have been searching?

Summary: John introduces Jesus in ways he will unpack throughout the gospel.

1. Imagine this first chapter is like meeting a new friend, except that new friend is Jesus. What do you learn about him from the descriptions in each of the following verses?
 - a. 1:1
 - b. 1:9
 - c. 1:14
 - d. 1:29
 - e. 1:38
 - f. 1:41
 - g. 1:45
 - h. 1:49
2. Write a short list of things John the baptizer accomplished (1:6-8, 19-36).
3. Put yourself in the disciples’ sandals. From these first interactions with Jesus (1:35-51), what about Him would make you willing to follow Him and learn from Him?

LESSON 2 NATHANIEL: SHARING THE REAL JESUS

TEXT: JOHN 1:43-51

Phil and Nate

“How can you believe in such a bigoted Jesus?” Nate demanded. Phil and Nate are coworkers. It’s Monday morning and the two were casually catching up on the events of the weekend. Phil decided to take the preacher’s advice and use this opportunity to mention that he and his family had attended church on Sunday to see if that could spark a more evangelistic conversation. The rest of the conversation disclosed that Nate has a lot of ideas about Jesus. By the end of the conversation Nate concluded, “I don’t understand your Jesus. My Jesus is love, he doesn’t judge, and he accepts everyone just the way they are.”

Philip, one of Jesus’ first disciples, went and found Nathaniel to tell him they had found the long-anticipated Messiah. Nathaniel became skeptical immediately after Philip announced it was Jesus of Nazareth. Nathaniel asked, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). Much like Nate, Nathaniel almost missed the real Messiah, because it didn’t seem to match his ideas about who he thought Jesus should be.

Discussion

1. What false claims or misrepresentations have you heard about Jesus?
2. Why is it tempting to be selective towards Jesus’ teachings or to connect Jesus to modern philosophies?
3. Philip doesn’t answer all of Nathaniel’s objections; he simply says, “Come and see” (John 1:46). How could Phil apply a “come and see” strategy to teach about the real Jesus?
4. How should Phil conclude the conversation to invite Nate to come and see?

LESSON 3

THE ROAD TO GOLGATHA

TEXT: JOHN 2:1-3:36

F A I T H M O M E N T

“Whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life,” Jesus says to Nicodemus (3:16). This famous verse establishes faith as the foundation for eternal life. But what kind of faith? John continues the thought, saying, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” (3:36). What is the proper relationship between faith and obedience?

Summary: Jesus predicts his death from the beginning of his ministry.

1. Imagine walking through a bookstore. You pick up a book and the front cover depicts both the wedding (2:1-12) and the cleansing of the temple (2:13-22). What would you anticipate about the contents of the book?
2. The song of David’s anguish in Psalm 69 anticipates Jesus’ crucifixion. Find where each of the following verses are quoted in the New Testament. [Cross references in your Bible or a word search in a Bible app may help.]
 - a. 69:4
 - b. 69:9
 - c. 69:21
 - d. 69:25
3. Read between the lines of Jesus’ death predictions (2:18-22; 3:14-15). What does he already know and is beginning to reveal?
4. John describes himself as a friend of the bridegroom to illustrate his relationship with Jesus (3:25-30). If in your own life you have either participated as a bridesmaid or a groomsman, or you selected a wedding party for your own nuptials, what does this illustration communicate to you? What in your own life must “decrease” in order that the ministry of Jesus may increase?

LESSON 4 NICODEMUS: CONFRONTING THE RELIGIOUS

TEXT: JOHN 3:1-21

Nick and Jeremy

“What Bible passage has interested you this week?” Nick asks as he passes Jeremy’s house while walking his dog. They both enjoy talking about the Bible, even though they recognize there are significant differences in what they believe it says. They exchange a few pleasantries over one of the Proverbs and what is happening at the different churches they attend before Nick continues his walk. Jeremy often leaves the conversations feeling guilty that he encourages the conversations to stay within their superficial similarities. It is scary to venture into those areas of disagreement since Nick knows so much about Scripture, and doing so could halt these conversations altogether.

Nicodemus sought Jesus out (John 3:1). He was interested in talking about God. Jesus, however, calls him to radical change and confronts his lack of understanding (3:3,10). Jesus doesn’t want expertise in Scripture or religious commitment to become the reason Nicodemus and Nick don’t come to true faith.

Discussion

1. Nicodemus obviously believed in God and had dedicated his life to serving Him; he even agreed that Jesus was a Rabbi who had God with him (John 3:1-2). Why didn’t Jesus just say, “Good enough,” and agree to disagree?
2. Jesus’ conversation choices seem strange. He discusses being “born again” (3:3) and the wind or Spirit (3:8), and the bronze serpent (3:14). Nicodemus is reasonably confused (3:9). What is the logic behind Jesus’ strategy (3:12)?

What topic should Jeremy choose when talking with Nick?

3. The reader is left uncertain about Nicodemus’ response. He is next found mildly defending Jesus among the Pharisees (John 7:48-52). He is still interested in Jesus, but slow to make any public display of faith. Finally, Nicodemus along with Joseph openly take Jesus body from the cross and bury him (John 19:38-42). His journey to faith likely took years! What should be a reasonable amount of time to expect Nick to make a change?

LESSON 5

THE MESSIAH IS COMING

TEXT: JOHN 4:1-54

F A I T H M O M E N T

Jesus encounters two unlikely exemplars to faith: the woman at the well and the official. Both have a contagious faith! The woman went through the town inviting all, saying “Come, see!” (4:29) while the official believed with all his household (4:53). Do you have contagious faith? List three people with whom you hope to share the gospel message.

Summary: Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah.

1. Jesus begins a conversation with a woman who did not expect it. From their initial interaction (4:7-15), did she seem interested in having a conversation with him?
2. What significant information does Jesus first reveal to this woman?
 - a. 4:15
 - b. 4:21-24
 - c. 4:25-26
3. The Samaritans first believed because of the testimony of the woman, but then believed because of their own experience with Jesus (4:42). As messengers for Christ, we want people to come to their own relationship with him. How would you encourage that transition?
4. The official’s faith grows throughout the story. How would you describe his faith at each of the following points?
 - a. 4:47
 - b. 4:50
 - c. 4:53a
 - d. 4:53b

LESSON 6 SAMARITAN: ENGAGING A SINFUL PAST

TEXT: JOHN 4:1-29, 39-42

Sammy and Susan

“It has been a long time since I have been to a church,” Sammy replied. Susan continued to invite, saying that there was a special event happening at the church that coming Sunday which would be a great opportunity for Sammy and her kids. Finally, Sammy blended fear and sadness when she said, “I am pretty sure the whole building would collapse on me if I ever walked through the door. The last time I went to a church they kicked me out. Now? If they knew what I’ve done since, they wouldn’t even let me in.”

The Samaritan woman, like Sammy, was a woman with a past. As Jesus’ conversation with her seemed to have reached a stalemate, he told her, “Go call your husband.” After she replied, “I have no husband,” he continued, “You are right, for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband” (John 4:16-18). Instead of being offended, she eventually accepts that Jesus is the Messiah and runs through the streets of the city saying, “Come, see the man who told me all that I ever did” (4:29, 39).

Discussion

1. Jesus was fully aware of the woman’s past (4:17-18). Bringing it up seems like rubbing salt on an open wound. What was Jesus trying to accomplish?
2. “Come, see the man who told me all that I ever did,” the woman proclaimed! Rather than a source of shame, her past had become a badge of honor. Paul, similarly, boasts that he is the greatest of all sinners (1 Timothy 1:12-17). Use these two passages to construct a one-sentence summary of the right perspective on a sinful past.
3. Both Paul and the woman used their pasts as a centerpiece in their evangelistic testimony. Write a short paragraph that you might share with someone else explaining your past sins and God’s grace.
4. How should Susan respond to Sammy?

LESSON 7

THE SON OF THE FATHER

TEXT: JOHN 5:1-47

F A I T H M O M E N T

Which parts of the Bible have contributed most to your faith? A look at your hard copy of the Bible may be telling. If you've been a Christian for any length of time, the pages of the New Testament may be saturated with finger smudges or even notes. But what about Deuteronomy? Jesus argued, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me" (5:46). Use the following four questions to find Jesus on every page:

- What does this Old Testament passage mean in its original context?
- How do the New Testament writers reflect on this passage?
- What aspect of Jesus' life and teaching does this passage anticipate?
- How will this passage equip me for good works in Jesus (2 Tim. 3:16-17)?

Summary: Jesus declares he is equal with God.

1. The Jewish response to the healed man was one of outrage, because the miracle has been done on the Sabbath (5:16). Jesus responds, saying, "My Father is working until now, and I am working" (5:17-18). What does this reveal about the work of the Father and the Son?
2. Jesus affirms that the Father has imbued the Son with the authority to do two great works not yet displayed in the ministry of Jesus (5:20-22). What two greater works have been entrusted to Jesus?
3. What three witnesses does Jesus bring to his defense (5:30-47)?
4. Imagine that you are a jury responsible for weighing testimony, analyzing evidence and rendering a verdict. How would you judge this miniature trial? What witness would have most persuaded you?

LESSON 8 INVALID: HELPING THE PHYSICALLY SICK

TEXT: JOHN 5:1-17

Walker and Malachi

“Sounds like you have been through a lot,” Malachi says finally. Walker has given a detailed summary of all his physical problems, his endless appointments, and the challenges of his daily life. “But I haven’t told you about...” Walker continued, seemingly energized by Malachi’s caring tone. Admittedly, Malachi only half-listened. Inside he kept trying to find words of Biblical comfort while also wondering how long this conversation would last.

Like Walker, the paralytic sits in his pain hoping for a miracle (John 5:1-9). He has watched as other people had been healed by the pools magic waters, but despairs thinking he will never have the chance. Even as Jesus asks him, “Do you want to be healed?” the man only explains how the waters work, possibly thinking Jesus may help him into the pool at just the right moment. Jesus didn’t need a pool to heal him. His care and conversation exemplify how to interact with the chronically ill.

Discussion

1. Imagine that you have been debilitatingly sick for thirty-eight years. What negative impact do you think that could have on your emotions, relationships, and faith?

How does it seem to have affected the paralytic (John 5:1-7)?

2. “Do you want to be healed?” Jesus asks (5:6). It’s not just the question with an obvious answer; Jesus is showing that he is willing to be present and helpful. What can Malachi do to follow Jesus’ example?
3. Jesus shifts from a conversation about the man’s physical illness to a spiritual one, saying, “Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you” (5:14). What “worse” thing is Jesus describing?
4. What is an appropriate way for Malachi to introduce spiritual health into his conversation with Walker?

LESSON 9

THE BREAD OF LIFE

TEXT: JOHN 6:1-71

F A I T H M O M E N T

Paul writes, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast,” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Many Christian thinkers have concluded, “Only faith and no works,” as the path to salvation, most particularly dismissing baptism as a work. Yet when Jesus was asked, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” he replied, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (John 6:28-29). How does this passage answer the faith only objection?

Summary: Jesus’ miraculous feeding reveals spiritual truths.

1. John has already compared Jesus to Moses (1:17-18; cf. 3:14; 5:46). That comparison takes center stage in this chapter. Use the chart below to show Jesus superiority.

<i>Moses</i>	<i>Comparison</i>	<i>Jesus</i>
Exodus 12:43-51		John 6:4
Numbers 1:2-3		John 6:10
Numbers 11:4-9		John 6:32-34
Exodus 14:26-29		John 6:16-20
Deuteronomy 18:18		John 6:14-15

2. After Jesus’ initial miracle, the crowds pursued Jesus to the other side of the Galilean Sea. What does Jesus reveal about their motives (6:25-34)? What would similar motivation pursue from Christianity today?
3. List the various reactions to Jesus throughout this section.
 - a. 6:30
 - b. 6:41
 - c. 6:52
 - d. 6:66
 - e. 6:67-68

LESSON 10

CROWDS: CHALLENGING EASY FAITH

TEXT: JOHN 6:25-71

Zeke and Shepherd

“Why do you want to get baptized today?” Shepherd asks. Zeke has come to him at the end of the service, saying he wants to be a Christian. Enthusiastically Zeke replies, “I love everything you have been preaching about being a Christian. Your sins are washed away, you spend eternity in heaven, you’re loved like family by the church, God hears your prayers, you’re blessed, the list goes on! Who wouldn’t want that?” Shepherd is hesitant. He doesn’t want to discourage Zeke, but he is worried that Zeke may have an unrealistic picture of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

The crowds who had eat their fill of bread and fish pursued Jesus to the other side of the Galilean Sea. Jesus indicts them, saying, “You are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you at your fill of the loaves” (John 6:26). Their hopes were disappointed; Jesus did not give them more food. Instead, he gave them some hard sayings (6:60). “After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him” (6:66). Jesus was unwilling to present a sugar-coated Christianity; Shepherd doesn’t want to either.

Discussion

1. The crowds grumbled and disputed in response to Jesus’ teaching. What did he say that the crowds would have found difficult to hear (John 6:35-59)?
2. Which teachings in the Bible have caused you or someone you know to wrestle?
3. What has been the most difficult part of your life as a disciple?
4. After Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Peter replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (6:67-69). How would you have answered the question? What keeps you from turning from Jesus?
5. Imagine you are Shepherd sitting on the front pew with Zeke. What do you say next?

LESSON 11

CAN THIS BE THE CHRIST?

TEXT: JOHN 7:1-8:11

F A I T H M O M E N T

“For not even his brothers believed in him” (7:5). “Have any of the authorities or Pharisees believed in him?” (7:48). These two quotes from John imply it is hard to believe when influential people don’t. Who do you view as credible or influential but is not a believer? How do you reconcile believing despite their influence? [Full disclosure: Jesus’ brothers, James and Jude, did come to faith as did Nicodemus, a Pharisees present for the rhetorical question.]

Summary: The crowds debate whether Jesus is the Messiah.

1. The Feast of Booths is an important backdrop for Jesus’ teachings in Jerusalem (7:2). The feast was designed to celebrate God’s deliverance in the Exodus (Leviticus 23:33-44), thus the people would live in booths to remember the wilderness. By Jesus’ day, the celebration also included water drawing and candle lighting ceremonies. How does Jesus use the images of water and light to reveal something about himself?
 - a. 7:37-39
 - b. 8:12
2. Tension between Jesus and the religious leader continues to escalate. What do the following verses reveal about the Jewish response to Jesus?
 - a. 7:1
 - b. 7:12
 - c. 7:20
 - d. 7:30
 - e. 7:32
 - f. 7:47-48
3. If you already believe in Jesus, it would be easy to look back on the debates of the crowds (7:25-31, 40-52) and scratch your head, wondering, “Why don’t they see what I see so clearly?” But put yourself in their sandals, at this point in the story, what would lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ? What questions would you still want answered?

LESSON 12 WOMAN: ENGAGING A SINFUL PRESENT

TEXT: JOHN 8:1-11

Audrey and Sarah

Audrey had a long night. Dancing for tips had really begun to weigh on her, but this had been a particularly bad night. She had to call the police on a patron who was stalking her, and she was sure that one of her coworkers was stealing from her. On her way home, cars were starting to fill the church parking lot. She came in hoping for hope. Sarah met Audrey near the front door. She could tell from Audrey's lost eyes and tight clothes that she wasn't used to being in a church. As she tried to comfort this beautiful but broken woman, she couldn't shake the nagging feeling that she was a little uncomfortable with many of the things Audrey was saying.

A woman was brought to Jesus as fresh from a strange man's bed as Audrey from her stage. The scribes and Pharisees were morally outraged at the woman. They were ready to pronounce her sentence. Ultimately, this passage isn't about the scribes or the woman. This was a test for Jesus (John 8:6). How would he respond to the woman's sin?

Discussion

1. "Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" (John 8:5). Pretend you don't know Jesus' answer. How would you have answered?
2. "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her," Jesus replies. They all went away one by one (John 8:7-9). What had Jesus' challenge revealed in the Scribes and Pharisees?
3. Jesus says both, "Neither do I condemn you," and, "Go, and from now on sin no more" (8:11). He was neither permissive nor punitive. How can Christians balance those two concepts while talking with worldly people?
4. The encounter between Audrey and Sarah is based on a true story. How should this church respond if an exotic dancer walked through the door?

LESSON 13

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

TEXT: JOHN 8:12-9:41

F A I T H M O M E N T

Faith is rarely a leap; it is more of a journey. Trace the evolution of the blind man's faith in each of the following statements he makes:

- John 9:11
- John 9:17
- John 9:33
- John 9:38

Summary: The Jews struggle to see the light.

1. Truth is a frequent theme throughout John's gospel (Greek synonyms for truth are used nearly ninety times in total). While Jesus argues that he is the light of the world, he asserts that the truth he gives "will set you free" (8:32). In what sense is this true?
2. "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree," is often said by those comparing one generation to the next. Using similar logic, what does Jesus imply about the Jews who had believed in him (8:31, 39-44)?
3. The Jews are ready to kill Jesus (8:59). What did Jesus say that would inspire such hostility?
4. Jesus proves that he is the light of the world by opening the eyes of a blind man (9:4-7). This leads to a discussion with the Pharisees (9:35-41) in which they ask, "Are we blind also?" Jesus shows the situations will be reversed, such that the blind will see and the seeing will become blind (9:39). To whom does Jesus refer as blind and seeing?

LESSON 14 BLIND MAN: HANDLING FAMILY REJECTION

TEXT: JOHN 9:1-41

Blake

“You should go to church where your family goes,” Blake’s mom argues. Ever since Blake got his driver’s license, he has been visiting different churches than the one where he grew up. The first few were from the same denomination, but recently he has attended a church that seems to him to be more Biblically based. This set off a string of confrontations with his mother. She has argued that the new church is a cult, that believing the teachings of this new church seems like condemning other relatives to hell, and that he would not be allowed to attend that church while living under her roof. None of this has changed Blake’s mind. Finally, Blake’s mom yells, “Pack your stuff and get out of my house.”

The blind man stood alone before the Pharisees in an impromptu trial about the miracle Jesus had performed and his beliefs about Jesus. Even his parents distanced themselves out of fear. John explains, “For the Jews has already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue” (John 9:22). The new faith of both Blake and the blind man put them at odds with their family and community.

Discussion

1. What were the ramifications of being put out of the synagogue (9:22)? What is the closest modern parallel?
2. What resistance have you experienced from family or friends concerning your faith? What stabilized your faith during that time?
3. Jesus found the blind man after he heard that they had cast him out (9:35-38). What important things did Jesus accomplish during this conversation?
4. If Blake showed up at your door with bags in hand, what would he need over the next month to help him maintain his faith and handle the relational fallout?

LESSON 15

THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE

TEXT: JOHN 10:1-11:57

F A I T H M O M E N T

Many promises are made for those who believe: they will become children of God (1:12), will not be condemned (3:18), will never thirst (6:35), will receive the Spirit (7:39), will not remain in darkness (12:46), will do the works of Jesus (14:12), and are blessed (20:29). No promise receives so much attention as the promise of eternal life (10:10, 28; 11:25-27; cf. 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 20:31).

What about the promise of eternal life motivates your faith?

Summary: Jesus' death gives life.

1. Jesus speaks of those who follow him in shepherding terms (10:1-27). How is your relationship with Jesus like the relationship between a sheep and its shepherd?
2. In contrast to the loving shepherd, Jesus identifies three kinds of people who are a danger to the sheep (10:4-13). How can you recognize the threat of a stranger, a thief or a hired?
3. All the disciples understood that Jesus' return to Judea would mean Jesus' eminent death (11:8-16). Thomas seems to speak for the group, saying, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (11:16). What would enable you to have such courage?
4. The Jews respond to the miracle of raising Lazarus by determining to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (12:9-11). The High Priest argued, "It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish" (11:49-53). While Caiaphas meant this in a much more sinister way, how is it true?

LESSON 16 THE SISTERS: COMFORTING THE GRIEVING

TEXT: JOHN 11:1-44

Mario and Joel

“I’m sorry to hear about your dad, Mario,” Joel said. Mario’s dad had died after a long and painful fight with cancer. “I have to admit,” Mario replied, “I am not handling it well.” “That’s hard too,” Joel adds, trying to be comforting, “Can I pray with you about that?” “NO!” Mario says abruptly. He explains, “I never stopped praying that he would heal my dad, but my dad is gone. God either couldn’t heal, or he could and didn’t, or he doesn’t care. Either way, I am done with God.”

Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus concerning their brother Lazarus, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill” (John 11:3). Like many whose family members are dying, they want Jesus to perform a miracle. But he didn’t come; he stayed two more days (11:6). When he finally arrived, both sisters repeated, “Lord, if you would have been here, my brother would not have died” (11:21, 32). The pain of loss is felt more acutely by Mario, Mary, and Martha, knowing that God could have prevented it.

Discussion

1. “If you would have been here,” the sisters cry (11:21, 32), wishing Jesus had come and acted sooner. Have you ever felt something similar after an “unanswered” prayer or a personal tragedy?
2. Jesus reveals to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” The resurrection allowed Paul to assert, “That you may not grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). How should the resurrection hope change how Christians grieve?
3. Jesus knew that he would raise Lazarus (11:4). Still, “Jesus wept” (11:35). Why did he weep?
4. Tragedy often causes questions about God. Through tears many have concluded, “He is either not all powerful, or he is not all good.” How should Joel reply to Mario’s objection?

LESSON 17

THE HOUR HAS COME

TEXT: JOHN 12:1-50

F A I T H M O M E N T

John unequivocally states, “Therefore they could not believe” (12:39). There are some Christians who would argue from this and similar passages that God individually selects people to salvation and withholds faith from others. Imagine sitting across the table from one who asserted, “God blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts in the next verse. This confirms that God’s sovereign will includes selecting some for condemnation.” How would you respond?

Summary: Jesus announces his eminent death.

1. Mary’s act of generosity is incredible (12:1-3). While Judas objects over her stewardship, Jesus defends her, arguing she will need it again (12:7). How do the actions of Mary and Judas foreshadow their role in Jesus’ death?
2. John quotes Zechariah to understand the importance of Jesus’ entrance (12:15; Zechariah 9:9-17). Search Zechariah’s prophecy for the reasons the sign of the king riding on a donkey’s colt would give them so much joy.
3. Jesus has said repeatedly throughout John that his hour had not yet come (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; cf. 7:6, 8). Finally, at the arrival of the Greeks seeking him, Jesus replies, “The hour has come...” (12:23). Why would this event be an appropriate trigger?
4. “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (12:24). Did Jesus say this concerning himself, believers, or both? Search the text for clues and explain your answer.

LESSON 18 AUTHORITIES: ALLURING THE SUCCESSFUL

TEXT: JOHN 12:37-43

Arthur and Adam

“This Sunday? I’m sorry. I can’t this time. I really need to work,” Arthur says. Adam has been inviting his neighbor to work periodically for over a year now. He always seems to get the same response— “I’m working.” This time Adam decides to inquire further. He asks, “Wow. Does your boss expect you to work so many weekends?” Adam replies, “No, but my boss sure doesn’t mind. Sundays are the days in which I do all the extra work that gives me a head start on Monday morning. If I keep going, there is the potential for a big promotion; I’d be the youngest person in company history to be put in that position. Thanks for the invite. I believe in God, you know. Ask me again in the Fall.”

Unlike Arthur, the authorities John describes (John 12:42) had already arrived at the pinnacle of their careers. They were the “authorities” after all. The problem was that now they had arrived, they didn’t want to give it up because they believed in Jesus. They liked their positions and the privileges. John explains they would not confess their faith, “For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God (12:43).

Discussion:

1. John clearly contrasts “the glory that comes from man” and “the glory that comes from God” (12:43). Create a list of benefits for both:
 - a. Glory from Man
 - b. Glory from God
2. Put yourself in the authorities sandals. Why would you prioritize man’s glory?
3. While there were those who did not believe (12:37), but there were some from the authorities who did believe, “but they did not confess it for fear of the Pharisees” (12:42). Will this faith (belief) save them?
4. The warning Jesus announces seems to be a direct response to their unbelief (12:44-50). How would you rephrase this warning for Arthur?

LESSON 19

I AM GOING

TEXT: JOHN 13:1-17:26

F A I T H M O M E N T

I don't envy the disciples. Two days later they will wake up to a world in which Jesus is dead. Knowing this, Jesus' final speech is filled with assurances and comforts. "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me," Jesus says (14:1). There are two responses to trials: they will either shake your faith or solidify it. What are the key factors to determine how your faith will respond to adversity?

Summary: Jesus prepares his disciples for his death.

1. Jesus declaration of his departure obviously unsettled the disciples. Summarize the promises Jesus made to comfort the disciples:
 - a. 14:1-7
 - b. 14:12-14
 - c. 14:18-24
 - d. 16:16-24
2. Based on the things Jesus must say to the disciples to prepare them for their relationship with the world (15:18-16:4; 17:14-19), how should you expect to be treated?
3. Use the chart to outline the work of the Holy Spirit as described by Jesus.

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Work of the Holy Spirit</i>
14:16	
14:17	
14:26	
15:26	
16:7	
16:8-11	
16:13	
16:14-15	

LESSON 20

ALL PEOPLE: LOVE AS EVANGELISM

TEXT: JOHN 13:34-35

Lori and Kathy

“I need your help,” Lori said humbly. Lori was the weird neighbor; she was reclusive, and her house was an unkempt menagerie of feral animals. Kathy and her family had tried for years to be kind and build a relationship, but nothing seemed to work. Kathy was surprised to find Lori at her door and noted that this might be the longest conversation they had ever shared. Lori was in a terrible condition, and she needed to go to the hospital, but her van had broken down and she wasn’t willing to call an ambulance. “Can you drive me?”

These were crucial hours in Jesus’ life because they were his last hours with his disciples. He had many things to teach them to prepare them to spread the gospel after his death. After getting up from the table and dressing himself like a servant, Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. After this he declared, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

Discussion

1. Jesus sets the standard of love, saying, “Just as I have loved you” (John 13:34). What about Jesus’ foot-washing had just demonstrated the kind of love he expects his disciples to show?
2. Jesus says that the world will know that you are my disciples “if you have love for one another” (13:35). Does this mean the love shared between Christians, or the love extended to unbelievers? Explain your answer.
3. Kathy’s interaction with Lori is based on a true story. Kathy and her family served Lori and treated her like family. What impact do you anticipate this would have on Lori’s life after a year?
4. How can a Christian be more intentional about using love as evangelism?

LESSON 21

KING OF THE JEWS

TEXT: JOHN 18:1-19:42

F A I T H M O M E N T

John functions as a witness on the stand in a trial (19:35; 21:24). He intends for you to see the gospel as a court case. Imagine that you are one of the jurors. How do you weigh the eye-witness testimony of this gospel? What pieces of its testimony do you find most compelling? The answers to these two questions will determine how this gospel account has grown or strengthened your faith.

Summary: Jesus is the crucified King!

1. What do you suppose was going through Peter's mind when he pulled out his sword (18:10) and then again when he denied Jesus (18:15-18, 25-27)?
2. Many have recognized Jesus as the King throughout John's gospel (1:49; 6:15; 12:12-15) The crucifixion is saturated with references to Jesus the King, but the tone seems very different than the rest of the book. What themes emerge from the king references in these final hours (18:33-39; 19:1-3, 12-15, 19-22)?
3. Summarize in a single word Pilate's actions and decisions leading to the crucifixion of Jesus (18:28-19:16).
4. Put yourself in the sandals of the women standing at the foot of the cross (19:25). Use each of your five senses to describe the crucifixion (19:16-36).

LESSON 22

PILATE: SHARING THE TRUTH

TEXT: JOHN 18:33-38

Piper and Olivia

“I don’t see what the big deal is,” Piper replied to Olivia. The two girls were discussing the latest gossip over their lunch table. Beyond the actual actions of their classmates, the conversation became a lowkey debate about being authentic. While Olivia proposed, “Just because it’s their brand doesn’t mean everyone will accept it,” Piper felt the topic ultimately decided by saying, “They should just live their truth; it doesn’t matter what other people think.”

Jesus is on trial, condemned by the mob as worthy of death. As Pilate tries to adjudicate the charges leveled at Jesus, he asks Jesus four questions (John 18:33, 35, 37, 38). Jesus asserts, “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate retorts, “What is truth?”

Discussion

1. Pilate’s question has become more relevant in our “Live Your Truth” era. Unpack that philosophy. What do people mean by the phrases, “Be authentic,” “Live your truth,” or, “That may be true for you, but not for me”?
2. Pilate asks, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). Famously, he didn’t stick around for the answer. From what we have studied from this Gospel account, how would John hope the reader would answer that question?
3. In writing the Gospel account, John emphasizes his role as a witness to the truth (19:35; 21:24). Imagine this is a court case and the gospel is on trial. In what sense is the Christian a witness to the truth?
4. Put yourself at that lunchroom table. List three things Olivia could say to continue the conversation with Piper.

LESSON 23

MY LORD AND MY GOD

TEXT: JOHN 20:1-29

F A I T H M O M E N T

Jesus responds to Thomas' amazing faith, saying, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (20:29). This is a blessing which rings throughout all future generations of Christians, including ours. Some would say, "Seeing is believing," but you didn't see and yet believe. How can you justify your faith without visual confirmation?

Summary: The resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples.

1. John's account of the events surrounding the morning of the resurrection is filled with specific details (20:1-10), no doubt because he is just speaking from personal experience of actual events. Which specific detail do you find most interesting?
2. Jesus declares, "I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (20:17). With great controversy, Jesus has claimed throughout John's account to be God's Son. After the resurrection, he declares God to be our Father also! How does the concept of a father help you to better understand your relationship with God?
3. After hearing the other disciples describe the resurrected Jesus, Thomas declares, "Unless I see... I will never believe" (20:25). Considering the two times Thomas is highlighted earlier in this gospel (11:16; 14:5), what could have inspired such a statement?
4. Thomas then declares that Jesus is, "My Lord and my God" (20:28). What makes this confession so surprising?

LESSON 24

THOMAS: VALUING DOUBT

TEXT: JOHN 20:19-29

Tom and Andy

“I’m deconstructing,” Tom says. Andy knows that this has become a codeword for challenging everything about one’s current belief system. Celebrities, social media personalities, and everyday Christians have published their deconstruction stories; each time seems to be just a post-mortem to a faith that has died. Andy is scared for his Christian brother—deconstruction sounds like destruction. Tom doesn’t seem like he has lost his faith, yet, but the tone of his voice sounds dejected, scared, and lost.

“Doubting Thomas” was the original skeptic. After the disciples reported that they had seen Jesus risen from the dead, Thomas declared, “Unless I see... I will never believe” (John 20:25). Thankfully, that is not the end of Thomas’ story. His story represents hope for those who doubt and wrestle with their faith.

Discussion:

1. What is the greatest doubt you have ever experienced in your life as a Christian?

Who did you talk to about it? What kind of response did you receive?

2. Is it healthy to challenge your beliefs? Explain your answer.
3. Thomas, who first said, “I will never believe,” is also the first to declare to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” While he began with the greatest doubt, he ended with the greatest faith. Is this still possible? Can doubt be a bridge to greater faith?
4. Has someone like Tom ever confided in you? What have you learned about responding to someone’s doubt?

LESSON 25

THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

TEXT: JOHN 20:30-21:25

F A I T H M O M E N T

John was selective when writing this gospel account. Obviously, there was more about Jesus that he could have shared (20:30; 21:25). “But,” John wrote, “these are written so that you may believe.” Now, at the end of the text, what in this gospel or our discussions has had the most profound impact on your faith?

Summary: The resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples again.

1. Peter announces to his fellow disciples, “I am going fishing.” How is this story (21:1-11) like Peter’s first encounter with Jesus (Luke 5:1-11).
2. If it is obviously Jesus eating breakfast with them on the shore, why would John mention that they dared not ask, “Who are you?” (21:12-14)
3. Each time Peter affirms his love, Jesus commands Peter to care for his sheep (21:15-17). According to his own writing, how did Peter fulfill this commission (1 Peter 5:1-4)?
4. John is gracious to explain Jesus cryptic prophecy (21:18-19); he was telling Peter how he would die. Then he charges him, “Follow me.” Would you find it easier or more difficult to continue in faith knowing such trials await you?
5. John never writes his name in the gospel account. He only refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” throughout the gospel (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20, 24). What from these verses identify John as the beloved disciple?

LESSON 26

PETER: TRYING AGAIN

TEXT: JOHN 21:15-19

Pete and Joe

"I messed up," Pete cries into the phone. Pete has been the preacher at a local church for the last eight years. About a year ago, he started having an affair with one of the women who worshipped with him. "I told myself a hundred times to end things with her, but my wife found the text messages last night. She said she is going to leave me and take the kids. My job is done; I will probably be asked to resign this coming Sunday. I don't know what to do!" Joe listens quietly, heartbroken for everyone involved. While he knows that each of them will need help healing, he knows he must be there for Pete so that this crucial moment can lead to repentance and salvation.

Peter must face his own failure on the shoreline with Jesus. "The rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times," Jesus warned Peter on the night he was betrayed (John 13:38). Hours later, in the light of the fire, Peter refused to be recognized as Jesus' disciple. Now, the resurrected Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" (John 21:15-17). Peter and Pete must confront their failures and learn to be disciples again.

Discussion

1. Jesus responded to Peter's failure by asking him, "Do you love me?" Why would this be an important question for Joe to ask Pete?
2. Each time Peter declares, "You know that I love you," Jesus responds with a command: "Feed my lambs," (21:15) "Tend my sheep," (21:16) and "Feed my sheep" (21:17). Jesus still had work for Peter to do. Is it important for repentant Christians to return to service? Explain your answer.
3. After Jesus' rather enigmatic prophecy, John explains, "This was to show by what kind of death [Peter] was to glorify God". He concludes, "Follow me" (21:18-20). Is Jesus punishing Peter while also calling him to further discipleship?
4. Outline the next steps Joe and Pete will need to walk together.