



A CORE GROUP STUDY THROUGH
THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN'S GOSPEL



Jesus of Nazareth is the unmistakable protagonist of the biblical story. Each of the gospels reflect not only the significance of his death and resurrection (which each writer allocates between $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ of space to), but also his life and teachings. While the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) reflect a similar account of Jesus's life and ministry on earth, upwards of 90 percent of John's gospel contains stories and discourses unique to this book of the Bible.

These unique stories capture the divine identity of Christ more clearly than any other place in scripture. Not surprising, given the purpose of the beloved disciple's gospel: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)

Rather than focusing on the parables, miracles, and public teachings that characterize the synoptics, John teaches that Jesus is the son of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29) and extends to us the readers an invitation to believe so that we may have life in his name.

JESUS THE SON OF GOD

Unique to this fourth gospel are seven statements Jesus begins with "I am." Now, odds are you and I use I am statements all the time without much fanfare or thought. Sometimes to describe a feeling—I am hungry. I am overwhelmed with this P Set. I am both hungry and overwhelmed with this P Set. Sometimes we use these statements to describe an aspect of our identity—I am a Yalie. I am a brother. I am a student.

The significance of Jesus's I am statements would have called his original Jewish listeners back to Torah. The phrase "I am" reflects Exodus 3:14, where God introduces himself to Moses (in the form of a burning bush no less) with the expression "I am who I am."

Therefore, when Jesus uses these statements, he is explicitly identifying himself as God—made flesh—bearing his image upon a broken world. Jesus often speaks in metaphors, so each of these statements reflects a deeper truth about who Jesus is and what he came to do:

I am the bread of life (6:35)

I am the light of the world (8:12)

I am the door (10:7)

I am the good shepherd (10:11,14)

I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)

I am the way the truth and the life (14:6)

I am the true vine (15:1)



THE STRUCTURE OF JOHN



The fourth gospel is beautiful in its methodical structure and rich in its symbolism. While there are many nuances to its organization, we can break it into four sections (you can learn more about each of these sections as we progress in this study):

Part I: Prologue — 1:1-18

Part II: Book of Signs — 1:19-12:50

Part III: Book of Glory — 13:1-20:31

Part IV: Epilogue — 21:1-25

John is meticulously well-constructed—there are no passages that are unimportant. Keep that in mind as your core group journeys through these ten weekly studies. Do we cover every passage? No. Are these the most essential to our understanding of the gospel? Also no. But they do reveal some of this gospel's central themes: Jesus enters into his creation, and, through his signs and wonders, is ushering in a kingdom in which all creation is made new once more.

A recurring question in this core group study is:

"what does this say about who Jesus is and what he came to do?"

Keep this question in mind as you journey both devotionally and with your core group through this gospel.

Together, remember to keep this gospel's purpose at the forefront. Each of these stories and chapters "are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)





HOW DO YOU PERFORM A "CLOSE READING" OF SCRIPTURE?

As you move through this Bible study there will be multiple times where we ask you to perform a close reading of the passage and to look for words or themes that stand out to you. The goal of a close reading of Scripture is to look for insights and observations that would not come to you upon your first reading of a passage (if you've taken any English courses at Yale, you might be familiar with this concept!).

All Scripture was written with a specific purpose in mind and toward a particular audience. When we read through a passage it is easy to walk away with our own impressions, but those are colored by our context.

As you read through these passages try to make as many observations as possible. Note the subject of each verse alongside its predicate. Pick out any parallelism, recurring words and phrases, and prevalent ideas or themes. As you form questions of the text, you can let your observations guide you to a reasonable interpretation together.

Remember, there is freedom in this process. While we want to make sure our answers are grounded in a proper reading of scripture, if it stands out to you, underline it or ask your question without fear that you are "doing it wrong." There may be some questions for which you need the help of a Bible dictionary or commentary.

Below is an example of what it could look like to do a close reading of John 1:43-51:

Questions I have:

what are all the ways that others refer to Jesus? Is there any significance to that?

what is significant about the way Jesus talks about seeing Nathanael?

what is the purpose of this brief passage?

why is Jesus telling them about what is to come?

43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said *Jesus says this alot. Did Philip know him?* to him, "Follow me." 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of *did Philip know them?* Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything *what is Nazareth like?* good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an *no deceit???* Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" 48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." 49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? *why is this repeated?* You will see greater things than these." 51 And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."
 ** look up in commentary

where did Moses write about Jesus?

how did he know that?



CORE GROUP STUDIES

WEEK ONE

"The Word became Flesh."

John 1:1-18

WEEK TWO

"...the first of signs through which He revealed his Glory."

John 2:1-11

WEEK THREE

"...unless they are born again."

John 3:1-15

WEEK FOUR

"Do you want to get well?"

John 5:1-18

WEEK FIVE

"Lord, the one you love is sick..."

John 11:1-45

WEEK SIX

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

John 12:20-36

WEEK SEVEN

"He loved them to the end."

John 13:1-17

WEEK EIGHT

"Remain in Me."

John 15:1-17

WEEK NINE


"It is finished."

John 19:1-37

WEEK TEN

"The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord."

John 20:1-31



One of the resounding themes of John's gospel is God making his creation new once more. Throughout the design of this study you will see various forms of trees—this is meant to call back to the many trees of the creation story: a lush tree of life in the garden, a parch tree as the Israelites wandered the desert, the "true vine" of Israel, the tree on which Jesus was hung in his crucifixion, all culminating in the ultimate tree of life we see in the new earth, the leaves of which "were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2).





“The Word became flesh...”



The prologue to the fourth gospel is one of the most beautifully arranged passages in scripture. The Bible Project states the distinctiveness of John’s gospel lies in its emphasis of Jesus *“as Israel’s God becoming human, presenting signs that demonstrate the truth of his messianic claim and his offer of eternal life for any that will trust in him.”*

Each of the gospels opens with a direct reference to the Old Testament—a plot device to signal to the reader that the coming Christ is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and will usher Israel’s story (and the story of humanity) to its redemptive climax. John’s prologue opens with a reference from the very first page of scripture: *“in the beginning was the word.”*

From the opening line to the end, the prologue is filled with references to the Old Testament (to convey Jesus is God in the flesh) as well as foreshadowing themes that will continue throughout the gospel. John is not simply reminding his readers the Old Testament is a thing that exists, rather he is introducing a central theme in his gospel (and in scripture as a whole): **what God is doing in Genesis 1 (the creation of the world), he is doing through Jesus Christ (making creation new).**

From the beginning of scripture, to its redemptive climax, to the final page we see a God deeply invested in *“making all things new.”*

As we read this passage, note the ways at which John looks back and forward to illustrate what Hebrews 13:8 says: *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*

Note: on the following page is an annotated copy of this week’s passage that includes references to the Old Testament as well as references to the rest of John’s gospel. Feel free to use whichever printout you would like for your Core Group discussion!

John 1:1-18

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") 16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

REFERENCES TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

Verse 1—
"In the beginning" immediately reminds any reader of the Old Testament of the opening verse of the Bible (Genesis 1:1)

Verse 3—
"And God said..." is repeated 10x in Genesis 1 as God creates all things.

Verse 4—
"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness." (Genesis 1:3-4)

Verse 13—
"And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.'" (Exodus 34:6-7)

Verse 14—
"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. 9 Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you." (Exodus 25:8-9)

Verse 14 & 18—
"But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by." (Exodus 33:20-22)

REFERENCES TO JOHN'S GOSPEL

Verse 1 & 2—
"And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." (John 17:5)

Verse 4—
"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself." (John 5:26) and "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)

Verse 5—
"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19)

Verse 9—
"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." (John 12:46)

Verse 11—
"(Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) (John 4:44)"

Verse 14 & 18—
"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Verse 17—
"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)

Verse 18—
"No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father." (John 6:46)

John 1:1-18

Verse 1—

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Verse 1—

The Word (Greek: *logos λόγος*) had special meaning to both Greeks and Jews. Some Greek philosophers, like the Stoics, when applying the word to the universe, meant the rational principle that governs all things. The Jews used the term to describe God himself (and his active and personal involvement in the world). Thus, John used a term meaningful to both his audiences.

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OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

Perform a close reading of this passage. What are words or themes that stand out?

Who is "The Word" John is referring to in this passage?

What does this poem tell us about the relationship between God and Jesus? Why is this significant to the original readers?

Why do you think John opens his Gospel with a poem (as opposed to a historical account common in the synoptic gospels)?

Why was John the Baptist (not to be confused with the gospel writer John) so important?

APPLICATION

Verse 18 speaks to the truth that through Jesus, God has become knowable (we can look at Jesus's words and actions to see what God is like). What does it look like for us to know God?

If it is true that God became flesh and dwelt among us, how does that change how we live? How do we cultivate a relationship with God?

What are the implications of God making himself human for the sake of redeeming the world?

LIVING ROOTED

Eugene Peterson paraphrases John 1:14 in *The Message* as: "*The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.*" What a beautiful image of God becoming flesh and moving on to Old Campus. In this act, Jesus models an incarnational love.

This week, practice the spiritual discipline of friendship. Grab lunch or coffee with someone from your core group. Hear their story, ask questions, and invest in building new relationships. Through friendship we can model the incarnational love of Christ.

A NOTE ON THE "SIGNS" OF JESUS



In the first half of John's gospel we see a specific emphasis on the "signs" Jesus performed. Throughout the gospels there are three different words that are used in Greek to describe miraculous events. While the synoptic gospels speak of miracles or mighty/powerful works, John speaks of "signs." In fact, John uses this word 16 times in the first 12 chapters.

A sign always points to some deeper truth beyond itself. Why is this significant? What John is saying is that these miracles are not just miracles for the person, but rather a sign that points to something greater about who Jesus is and what he came to do. (Think of John as the gospel for English majors—for many of the stories there is a meaning and a deeper meaning.)

For instance, there's a sign where Jesus feeds 5,000 by multiplying bread and fish. John would say, it's not just about the bread that filled people's bodies, it's about Jesus being the bread of life. On another occasion, Jesus heals a man on the sabbath and tells him to pick up his mat (a direct violation of a sabbath law) and walk. We see that this story is not just about the paralytic man's healing, but rather it reveals Jesus as the true sabbath giver. So we will see it's about something greater than just the miracle in itself, but points to who Jesus is and what he came to do.

Throughout the first half of John, we see Jesus perform a number of signs (culminating in the ultimate sign of his death and resurrection). While we will take a closer look at some of these signs in the coming weeks, these seven signs are prominent in this gospel:

- *Changing water into wine at Cana (2:1-11)*
- *Healing the royal official's son in Capernaum (4:46-54)*
- *Healing the paralytic at Bethesda (5:1-15)*
- *Feeding the 5000 (6:5-14)*
- *Jesus walking on water (6:16-24)*
- *Healing the man blind from birth (9:1-7)*
- *The raising of Lazarus (11:1-45)*

Surely, if every one of Jesus's signs were written down, "the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (John 21:25). Why these stories? John tells us at the end of his gospel that he writes of these miraculous signs that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and in believing you may have life. (John 20:30-31)

These signs invite us to make the same decision that Jesus's disciples made—we either dismiss Jesus as a mad man or worse a demoniac, or we recognize the glory of Jesus in these signs, trust them, and through Him have life.





*“...the first of signs through which
He revealed his Glory.”*



As we begin to look closer at Jesus’s signs, it’s important to state the obvious: it is not always clear what Jesus is trying to do (so if you’re struggling, you’re in good company) Because the significance of the story is not the sign itself, but rather what the sign is symbolic of, it sometimes feels like the disciples are asking one question and Jesus is answering a completely different one.

The story of Jesus’s first sign opens with a curious predicament: a wedding banquet that is quickly running out of wine. While we see throughout the gospels that Jesus is a fan of a good party (he frequently dines with tax collectors and sinners), this seems like a perplexing start to his public ministry.

So *what is happening here?* There are a few things we need to understand about a wedding banquet in first-century Judea. First, it was often a week-long event where in some cases, entire villages would have been invited. A family’s reputation and honor was on the line to provide a great party. Secondly, it was the groom’s responsibility to provide for the banquet, and in Jewish culture, running out of food and wine would be extremely dishonorable to guests.

In fact, if you did run out the relatives of the bride could bring a lawsuit against you (not a good way to start off with your in-laws) because you have shamed their family name. Your reputation would be permanently marked—you were “that guy” who ran out of provisions. Who ran out of wine. In an honor/shame culture you would carry that shame forever.

But that is not what happens here. Jesus instead enters into this person’s place of greatest shame and turns it into a remarkably memorable celebration. This is not a story about a bad party turned good, but a story of the messiah entering into our place of greatest sin and shame and transforming it into a place of grace, mercy and celebration. **It’s a story of turning water to new wine.**

A CLOSER LOOK—

HOW WAS WINE USED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

- The prophet Joel speaks of “*the day of the Lord*,” when things would be restored for God’s people and salvation would come: “*in that day the mountains will drip new wine and the hills will flow with milk.*” (3:18)
- Amos speaks of the restoration of Israel, when justice would come and the people of God would be saved and restored: “*new wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills.*” (9:13)
- Isaiah 25:6 speaks of when all things will be made new and restored to how they were intended to be: “*On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines...He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces...*”

In the Old Testament we see that wine is used as a symbol of salvation, blessing, restoration, renewal, peace (shalom), and of things being returned to the way they were meant to be.

John 2:1-11

Verses 3-4—

In this exchange Mary was focused on the running out of wine as a huge embarrassment to the hosts, Jesus was focused on his main mission (indicated by the word "hour"). In fact, this theme of Jesus's "hour" runs throughout the entire gospel, culminating in his final hour of the crucifixion. While Jesus calling his mother "woman" may seem strange and even derogatory, it was rather an indication that Jesus was looking beyond the immediate act at hand and towards the ultimate messianic feast.

Verse 10—

This is something that translates quite well to our modern times. Hosts would always start with the good wine in hopes that guests would become inebriated and not recognize the sub-par quality of subsequent wine. This host, however, (due to Jesus's sign) brought the best wine out later. While that is true, the emphasis here would have been on the superiority of Jesus's wine.

Verse 11—

The comment that through this sign Jesus reveals his glory suggests that the disciples of Jesus would have understood this sign's deeper meaning (in a way that the general on-looker may have missed). We as readers can see the contrast between the insipid water of old life and the richness of new life in Christ (if we only have faith to believe).

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee.

Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." 4

"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do

whatever he tells you." 6 Nearby stood six stone water jars,

the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each

holding from twenty to thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the

servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the

brim. 8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to

the master of the banquet." They did so, 9 and the master of

the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.

He did not realize where it had come from, though the

servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the

bridegroom aside 10 and said, "Everyone brings out the choice

wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had

too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." 11

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the

signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples

believed in him.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

Perform a close reading of this passage. What is the miracle of this passage? What might this say about who Jesus is?

In verse 6, the stone jars were used for ceremonial washing by Jewish people to remind them that they were sinners and that they needed to be cleansed to commune with God. What might the significance be that the water in the jugs used for ceremonial cleansing was turned into wine?

Wine is a symbol in the Old Testament of salvation, blessing, restoration, renewal, redemption, shalom and Jesus' first sign is turning water into wine. *What does this say about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish?*

APPLICATION

In this culture, to run out of wine at a wedding would have left a mark of shame on this family. *How do you think this man responded to Jesus entering into that place of shame and providing miraculously for the wedding banquet? Have you seen Jesus do a similar thing in your life?*

As with each of the signs in scripture, people had to make a choice about who Jesus was. *What choice is this sign inviting you to make?*

LIVING ROOTED

An interesting observation in this passage: Jesus used other people to fill the jars to the brim with water—a task Jesus could have done, but instead he invited others to participate in his sign of turning water into wine. Sure, they needed to be obedient to Jesus's comment, but as they did, Jesus turned water into wine!

We know that when Jesus turned water into wine he was bringing about restoration, redemption, and renewal. Is it possible in some small (or big) way, Jesus wants to use you to turn water into wine on campus? This week, think of simple tangible ways you can walk in love for your peers in the hopes Jesus can turn water into wine:

- It may look like dropping cookies off at someone's door. And in the middle of that box of cookies, that act of kindness and generosity, God uses that to turn water into wine.
- It may look like you are listening and caring for someone in your college that everyone else is ignoring, but you use those moments to speak truth and life and you turn water into wine.
- It may look like inviting a new person to play basketball with the crew and by investing in that life-giving relationship water slowly turns to wine.

We encourage you to open your heart and ask how God might want to use you to bring restoration, redemption and renewal. To turn water into wine.



“...unless they are born again.”



John 3:1-18

In this week’s passage, we have an opportunity to listen in on a conversation with a highly educated, well respected man who witnesses the signs Jesus performed and has some questions. Under the cover of night (perhaps to preserve his reputation among the religious elite) Nicodemus meets face-to-face with Jesus. He has presumably heard about Jesus turning water to wine. He has presumably seen Jesus perform other miraculous signs. He’s no doubt perplexed, intrigued, and possibly fearful at the implications these signs have on his life. And now, the Pharisee has the opportunity to speak with the man who could be the prophetic hope of Israel.

Before we get there, here is what we need to know about Nicodemus—he was an elite member of the Jewish ruling council. He was well-respected in his society. Pharisees may have a bad reputation in the gospels (deservedly), but even so, they were a religion of the greatest moral structure possible. He comes to Jesus who has no formal education and is unpopular and bestows the honor and respect of calling him rabbi. If Nicodemus were at Yale, he would be the most admirable person we know. And yet, this is who Jesus tells “you must be born-again.”

Think of your goals in life—maybe you relate to Nicodemus. You strive to be a good and moral person. You long to rise to the top of your field; to be excellent in what you do, and hopefully be well-respected and well-liked in the process. This week’s passage tells us it is not enough to be distinguished; it is not enough to be a “good” person. It is not enough to recite the prayers or give money to the temple.

Jesus invites us to be born again of water and the spirit. This is not a call to be more devout to a religion or moral code. **The “new birth” is not reserved for a certain type of person. It is for everyone.**

A CLOSER LOOK—

WORD IMAGE: BORN AGAIN

Are conversion and new birth the same thing? Pastor and Theologian Tim Keller argues they are two sides of the same coin—conversion is what we do to go to God, and new birth is what God does to come to us.

What does this mean? This peculiar image of being “born again” is simultaneously confusing and significant (Nicodemus even quips “surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”). There are some observations we can read into this image:

The first is this idea that we are saved by grace. This idea is simple through the metaphor of new birth—babies did not do anything to be born. Rather it was through the pain and suffering of their mother’s labor that brought them into the world (this is true of our new birth—it is through the pain and suffering of Jesus that we can be saved by grace).

This image of birth is repeated in John 16. Jesus is telling his disciples of a time when their grief will be turned to joy: “A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy” (16:21-22). *What are we to make of this?* When Jesus’s time comes (on the cross) through great suffering he will make a way for us to be made righteous through grace.

John 3:1-18

Verse 2—

John takes care to mention that Nicodemus came at night. While this could merely be a description of the time of day and nothing more, it could also symbolically reflect the state of Nicodemus's soul and his desire to converse with the rabbi under the cover of darkness.

Verse 3—

The Greek for "again" (ἄνωθεν) also means from above (also in verse 7).

Verse 5—

While references to the Kingdom of God are common in the synoptic gospels, John mentions the phrase almost exclusively in this passage. *What would that term have meant to this Jewish audience? The resurrection at the end of time. What Jesus is saying is you can enter into the kingdom of God now. The future kingdom of God can come into your life now. We see this idea of new birth reflected again in Titus 3:5-7: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."*

Verse 14—

Jesus then refers to another Old Testament story that Nicodemus would know well and tells us how we enter into this new life. He references an obscure story of the Israelites in the desert from Numbers 21. The people had sinned and under God's judgment they had been bitten by an influx of poisonous snakes. Israelites are dying from the poison. Then God tells Moses to make a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone bitten by a snake looked up at the bronze snake lifted high, they would live.

Jesus says that just as Moses lifted up the snake, so when He is lifted up (a reference to the crucifixion), that everyone who places their trust in Him, looks to Him, will have eternal life. We don't receive new birth because of what we do, but because of what God did for us in Christ, taking the wrath of our sin and giving us new life!

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." 3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." 4 "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." 9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. 10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? 11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? 13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

Perform a close reading of this passage. What are words or themes that stand out? What are some general observations you have?

Some theologians have made the connection that this passage serves as a discourse for the preceding sign (last week's passage on Jesus turning water to wine). In what ways are the ideas in these passages connected?

Nicodemus shows up two other times in the Gospel of John—in 7:50-52 and in 19:38-42. Do you notice a transformation in Nicodemus's life as a result of this conversation? Do you think he eventually understood what it means to be born again?

APPLICATION

In verse 8, Jesus makes a comparison between the wind and being born again of the spirit. What he is saying is that although there is a lack of knowledge about the origins of both wind and spirit, the effects of both are observable. What are some ways we can observe the Spirit's work in our lives?

Think of the power of the New Birth (what did it do for Peter—look what it did for Paul). Do you believe that God's power can shape your life too?

Do you think God loves you because you are a moral or good person? Do you think God loves you because you are successful? Do you think God loves you because you care for others or are a good friend? Or do you believe that God loves you unconditionally?

LIVING ROOTED

This week, take some extra time in prayer and reflection with God.

- We see in this passage that like the wind, we can't see how the Spirit is working, but we can observe its effects. What ways do you see the Spirit working in your life?
- Do you struggle with trying hard to "be a good person" to earn Christ's love? Note: this is not the same as aiming to live a virtuous life, but rather are your motivations rooted in looking good or earning love? Talk about some of these observations with a friend or mentor.
- Lastly, have you experienced this "new birth" that Jesus talks about? Do you desire to? (If yes, you need only to ask Jesus in prayer!)

“Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favorite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end submit with every fiber of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.”

C.S. LEWIS, MERE CHRISTIANITY



“Do you want to get well?”



In chapter 5, we begin to see a shift from mere hesitation about Jesus and his ministry to outright and sometimes official opposition. That opposition begins in this chapter with a simple question: *“Do you want to get well?”*

Here Jesus is speaking to a man who has been an invalid for 38 years, placing all of his hopes in a superstitious ritual in hopes of being healed. On a surface level, this may seem like an obvious, even awkward question. Yet, he does not answer Jesus with a resounding yes. Instead, he rattles off excuses. But, with the command of Jesus to walk, this man stands to his feet for the first time in decades! What an incredible sight that must have been!

We see in this passage the beautiful truth that when Jesus commands it, he does for this man and for us, what is impossible to do for ourselves. This is the Gospel. For centuries Christ brings people face-to-face with the one thing that paralyzes them and enables them to do the thing they could not do! What a marvelous sign to have beheld.

However, the story takes a turn. Instead of rejoicing that a lame man can now walk, we find uproar and consternation that Jesus has healed a man on the sabbath. What? In this day, the Pharisees created 39 different categories with 1,521 different things you couldn't do on the sabbath and one of them was to carry an empty bed. The irony is not lost here—the officials hear of a miraculous healing and formal breach of the sabbath law, and are significantly more concerned with the latter.

The story ends on a somber note: the authorities plot to kill Jesus for healing on the sabbath, and the man (despite initial ignorance of the identity of his healer) proclaims Jesus's responsibility for the miracle, feeding the hostile opposition.

Despite this cautionary tale, for those who believe, this passage is a wonderful picture of the gospel: we are helpless and hopeless, paralyzed and dying in our sin. **Jesus comes to us and by His grace gives us new life, gives us true Sabbath rest!**

John 5:1-18

Verse 2—

For a long time people didn't think that there were 5 covered colonnades, but as archeologists have excavated in this past generation, they discovered there are actually 5 of them. This is one of those moments where we see John paying great attention to detail, and it strengthens our trust in his Gospel.

Verse 3—

Why would people gather here? There was a superstition that every once and a while the waters would be stirred by an angel and the first one in the pool would be healed. We know now, these stirrings were likely caused by intermittent springs that fed the pools, but the superstition persisted. Maybe God healed someone there, and that's why it stuck, but that is not the point. The point of this passage is there was a man who had been paralyzed, and he was at the pool when Jesus came on the scene.

Verse 5—

As you've probably grasped by now, John writes his gospel with meticulous and intentional detail. Thus, when he lists a precise number, it usually has some significance. The fact that the man had been an invalid for 38 years suggests this was common knowledge among the people and this man was probably notorious for being there.

Verse 14—

Do Jesus's words here reflect that the man's illness is caused by sin? We do not know (however we do know that not all illness is sin-related). It seems likely that Jesus is warning about a moral lameness which would be worse than the physical lameness from which this man was delivered. However, it could be that this man was injured as the result of a specific sin. Either way, Jesus could be warning of the final judgement here which would be a worse consequence than physical lameness.

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. 5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” 7 “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” 8 Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” 9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.” 11 But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’ ” 12 So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?” 13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. 14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” 15 The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well. 16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. 17 In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” 18 For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

Perform a close reading of this passage. What are words or themes that stand out? What are some general observations you have?

How does this man respond to Jesus's healing? Is this a positive response or a negative one?

Why do the Jewish officials respond in this way? Do you think we are similar to responding to the works of Jesus by being concerned with things of secondary importance as opposed to marveling in the glory of Jesus?

This is one of the signs of Jesus. What is the literal sign in this passage? What does that sign signify about who Jesus is and what he came to do?

Which of these verses summarizes what Jesus came to do?

APPLICATION

For the man in the story, we might think the answer to Jesus's question would be a resounding yes. However, if we peel back the layers of our own brokenness, we might not be so quick to answer Jesus's question and invitation of getting well with a yes. Take some time to think through these questions, maybe journal some responses, and come back together with your Core Group and discuss any insights you feel comfortable with:

- o Is there a sin you don't actually wish to be free of? In his memoir *Confessions*, Augustine recounts that he would pray, "Lord, make me chaste—but not yet."—do we approach any sin in our lives in this same way?
- o Do you carry issues of unforgiveness in your life?
- o Have your personal areas of brokenness become a part of your identity?
- o Do you value your convenience more than your wholeness? (For example, is there a sin for which to repent would require making uncomfortable and inconvenient changes in your life, such as getting rid of a smartphone or setting spending limits on a credit card).

LIVING ROOTED

Continue this week to think about the questions above in your devotional time with Jesus. Are there sins you need to confess before God? Try meeting this week with a friend or mentor and confess these sins out loud. If you are receiving a confession, remind that person of the freedom that is received by God's grace when we confess our sins! Celebrate together! If there is accountability needed, think of ways that could look as we walk towards wholeness and healing.



“Lord, the one you love is sick...”



We have reached another transition point in the Gospel of John. Chapters 11 and 12 function as the transition from Jesus’s public ministry to his passion narrative. Prior to this junction, we have learned Jesus is the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12), the door (10:7), the good shepherd (10:11,14), and now we learn that Jesus is the resurrection and the life—he is the giver of life itself.

This week’s passage starts curiously enough: Jesus receives word that “the one [he] loves is sick.” What does he do with this information? Waits two days to leave. That is very strange. When Jesus does not respond in a typical way, the obvious question is *why?*

As we are well-acquainted with by now, Jesus’s signs are deeper than the obvious miracle at hand: he proclaimed that *“it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified.”*

The passage today is the climactic narrative of the signs of Jesus: we see in the raising of Lazarus the unrivaled power of Jesus over the final enemy of humanity: death itself. Lazarus was very much dead, and now he is alive again!

Like every other sign preceding it, those who witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead are forced to make a decision about who Jesus is: some believed (11:45); some reported the incident to the

authorities (46); the Pharisees discussed the matter in the Sanhedrin and decided to plot Jesus’s death (47).

Even a sign as remarkable as raising someone from the dead was not enough for those determined not to believe. We will soon see how true that is when Jesus faces his own fate.

It’s important to note: Lazarus was called to a restoration of mortal life—he would eventually die again. This sign provides a pale anticipation for Jesus’s glory and victory over death. It foreshadows and prepares us for Jesus’s ultimate resurrection—one in which death would have no power anymore.

John II:I-45

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." 8 "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. 10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light." 11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." 12 His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. 14 So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Verse 5 & 6 –

These two verses do not seem like a reasonable cause and effect—yet they are. Jesus loved them, and therefore waited two days to leave for Bethany. Why? As we are well-acquainted with by now, Jesus's signs are deeper than the obvious miracle at hand. Therefore, it's possible that Jesus wanted to strengthen the faith of his disciples (who probably feared for their lives as tensions were rising in Jerusalem at Jesus's ministry) and to reveal his glory to the Bethany family and beyond. It is also worth noting that we are about to see a shift in John's gospel where Jesus retreats from the public in order to train and teach his disciples. He is no doubt using this moment to continue to build the faith of his disciples to carry out his mission when he is gone.

John II:I-45

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 21 “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” 23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24 Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” 27 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.” 28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

Verse 25–

The highlight of the narrative is the “I am” saying found in verse 25. Here, Jesus identifies himself with both resurrection and life. While these are two elements of the same concept, it was the purpose of the mission of the resurrected Christ to bring new life (and new creation) to the fullest sense. The way to this new life was through faith. We don’t know the extent to which Martha understood Jesus’s messiahship, but John viewed her response with utmost importance, and thus included it in his gospel.

John 11:1-45

Verse 33—

What does it mean that Jesus was deeply moved and troubled? The Greek word *embrimaomai* is used here. In extra-biblical Greek, this word can refer to the snorting of horses; as applied to humans it suggests anger, outrage, or emotional indignation. So what then was Jesus angry about? It's possible that his outrage (and his grief noted in verse 35) is directed at sin, illness, death—all devastating features of our fallen world. D.A. Carson notes in his commentary on the gospel: "those who follow Jesus as his disciples today do well to learn the same tension—that grief and compassion without outrage reduce to mere sentiment, while outrage without grief hardens into self-righteous arrogance and irascibility" (416).

32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" 38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." 45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

Perform a close reading of this passage. What are words or themes that stand out? What are some general observations you have?

This is one of the signs of Jesus. What is the literal sign in this passage? What does that sign signify about who Jesus is and what he came to do?

Verses 5 and 6 are an odd cause and effect. Why did Jesus's love for that family prevent him from leaving sooner? What does this say about Jesus's mission?

What does it mean in verse 25 that Jesus is "the resurrection and the life"?

APPLICATION

Let's revisit Carson's note on Jesus's strong emotions in verses 33-35: *"those who follow Jesus as his disciples today do well to learn the same tension—that grief and compassion without outrage reduce to mere sentiment, while outrage without grief hardens into self-righteous arrogance and irascibility"* (416). How did Jesus model grief, compassion, and outrage well? What are examples we see in our culture or in our own lives of missing one of those components?

LIVING ROOTED

This week, think about the ways you interact with the culture around you. Think about the roles grief, compassion, and outrage play in your daily life:

- Do you know how to grieve and mourn loss? Do you know how to lament injustices that you see? Or do you stuff uncomfortable feelings down and operate from a place of emotional numbness?
- Do you show compassion to the people in your life who are suffering? Are you fatigued by the overwhelming brokenness of the world that makes compassion difficult?
- Do you experience outrage in your life? Does that outrage lead to good fruit or bad fruit? How can you fix that?



“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”



John 12:20-50

Last week, we saw Jesus perform the preeminent miraculous sign—raising Lazarus from the dead, a fitting climax of the signs. John 12, however, provides a theological climax to the gospel, situated right before the farewell discourse.

The emerging theme here is glory (a theme that will be unpacked further in the rest of the gospel). The words glory and glorify appear throughout this week’s passage. The hour has come for the son of Man to be glorified! Finally, the Israelites’ dreams for a Messiah are being realized! And the disciples are here to witness it!

Knowing what is to come, Jesus subverts people’s notions of glory. Jesus is indeed exalted and glorified, but Jesus’s glory looks to us like shame and humiliation and suffering (not at all what his followers expected). The supreme moment of Jesus being high and lifted up, participating in the divine glory that we see depicted in Isaiah 6, is the cross, where Jesus is lifted up.

The cross is the supreme revelation of His divine glory. This is stunning, since one of the worst things about crucifixion in the ancient Roman mind is the intense shame of it. But the supreme humiliation of Jesus is in fact His glory.

In Christ, God gives us a new framework for what honor and shame truly are. And so when we talk of the sovereign God’s glory, let us not imagine an absolute human monarch or a tyrannical dictator. God’s glory is precisely in His self-giving.

Verses 42-43 then leads us to ask ourselves: ***What kind of glory do we want for ourselves? Do we want the human glory that rejects the discomfort and shame that so often comes from self-giving? Or do we want the divine glory that Jesus models for us?***

John 12:20-50

20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” 22 Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. 23 Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25 Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. 27 “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. 30 Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. 31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. 34 The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?” 35 Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. 36 Believe in the light while you have the light, so that

Verse 31—

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we see the verb “drive out” used when Jesus casts out a demon. (See, for instance, Mark 1:34.) But unlike the Synoptic Gospels, John doesn’t have any exorcisms. The closest thing we have is John 12:31—the exorcism par excellence—where not just a demon but the prince of demons, the ruler of this world, is cast out. For John, the glorification and the lifting up of Jesus is the exorcism that *really* matters.

John 12:20-50

Verse 32 to 41—

What does it mean for Jesus to be lifted up? There's a play on words here, which the NIV footnote helpfully draws our attention to (it says "The Greek for lifted up also means exalted"—footnotes are important!) The verb "lifted up" could refer to Jesus being exalted, especially since Jesus was just talking in v. 23 about how it's time for him to be glorified. We also notice that Isaiah 6 is quoted below in 12:38 and remember how that section begins with Isaiah's vision of God "high and lifted up" (Isa 6:1). John is a subtle enough writer that this parallel is likely not by accident. Jesus is about to be exalted and glorified—even as Isaiah saw God exalted and glorified!—and He's going to powerfully cast out the ruler of this world.

But...He does so by dying. "He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die" (v. 33). For Jesus to be lifted up doesn't just mean that he's going to be exalted; it means that he's going to be physically lifted up on the cross. Again, we notice that Isaiah 52-53 is quoted below in 12:39-41, and Isaiah begins this section with a remark about God's servant being "exalted and lifted up" (Isaiah 52:13); as Isaiah continues to describe in 53, that exaltation entails God's servant—Jesus—being despised and rejected, wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.

you may become children of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them. 37 Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. 38 This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" 39 For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: 40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them." 41 Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. 42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved human praise more than praise from God. 44 Then Jesus cried out, "Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. 45 The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. 46 I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. 47 "If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. 49 For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. 50 I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

Perform a close reading of this passage. What are words or themes that stand out? What are some general observations you have?

Jesus says in verse 24: *"unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."* What does this image mean literally? What then, do you think Jesus takes this to mean?

What is Jesus saying here about glory? How might this stand contrary to what his original hearers might have thought or expected?

APPLICATION

What kind of glory do we want for ourselves? Do we want the human glory that rejects the discomfort and shame that so often comes from self-giving? Or do we want the divine glory that Jesus models for us?

Jesus says in verse 26: *"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."* What would it take to live that out at Yale?

LIVING ROOTED

Jesus has some pretty radical things to say about what it means to live a life of humility. This week, meet 1:1 with someone from your Core Group and answer some of these questions more in depth: what kind of glory do you seek at Yale (and beyond)? Are there any corrections you need to make in your thinking? How can you make choices now that will help you more closely model the humility of Christ to others?



“...He loved them to the end.”



John 13:1-17

This week we see another pivot point in the Gospel of John. Jesus retreats from the public eye into the company of his closest disciples. Early in John's gospel, we have seen a pattern emerge: a sign is followed by an extended discourse that serves to unpack the significance of the sign (think: Jesus feeds the 5,000 bread and fish and proceeds to proclaim he is "the bread of life"). Here, this pattern is reversed. Beginning in chapter 13 we see Jesus begin to unpack the significance before the ultimate sign: the death, burial, and resurrection of himself and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Many weeks ago, we studied Jesus's inaugural sign of turning water into wine where he told his mother "my hour has not yet come." We see this become a recurring theme throughout John's gospel. This week, we see the realization that Jesus's hour has come. Jesus knows that his death is near and his time with his disciples is limited.

The evening meal is in progress. Normally a servant would wash the feet of the guests (a job reserved for the bottom of the social hierarchy), but there were no servants available for the task. Jesus stood up, wrapped a towel around his waist and assumed the role of the meek and lowly (we see echos of Philippians 2 in this passage: "...he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant...")

As you read the passage this week keep in mind what comes after. In verse 34, Jesus gives his disciples a new command: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Now this is reminiscent of an Old Testament command. The newness comes with learning to love one another as Christ has loved them. **Jesus makes it clear that radical acts of generosity are to be the hallmark of his disciples, and the way to heal a broken world.**

John 13:1-17

Verse 1—

Throughout this gospel Jesus has indicated his climactic hour (determined by the Father) has not yet arrived. In this passage, we see Jesus shift to understanding his hour has come.

Verse 3—

We must not miss what this scripture is saying: Jesus's knowledge of the Father's will (articulated in verse 1) is repeated with some major additions, particularly that the Father had put all things under his power. This is significant. We might expect Jesus to respond in a flashy triumphant victory over Satan right then and there; instead, he chooses to assume the posture of the lowest and wash his disciples' feet—including the one who would betray him.

Verse 5—

Feet washing would have normally occurred before the meal began. It is no surprise that none of the disciples would do it— it was a job reserved strictly for those at the bottom of the social hierarchy— women, children, and gentile slaves (a Jewish slave wouldn't even attempt it if a gentile slave were available). Thus Jesus's act of humility was an unnecessary and incredibly stunning display of love.

Verse 17—

Jesus is demonstrating some difficult demands to our discipleship — we must follow Jesus in service, love, and humility (and in a way that gets our hands dirty). Jesus has already condemned those who hear his words and don't obey them. Here he is offering a reminder that his disciples must be people of obedience to his words. A cautionary tale for each of us: it's not enough to know Jesus's words, we must obey them.

1 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2 The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" 10 Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. 12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

Perform a close reading of this passage. What are words or themes that stand out? What are some general observations you have?

Why would Jesus—with all the power of the Father—choose to wash his disciples feet?

What does Peter mean in verse 8? Why do you think he says that?

Imagine being in the room as one of Jesus's disciples. Knowing the cultural expectations that surrounded this act of service, how might you have felt seeing Jesus assume this posture of the lowest? How would you have responded? Like Peter?

APPLICATION

What would it look like to serve one another at Yale with the humility Jesus modeled? How can we daily practice serving others in humility?

Ask yourself: when was the last time I inconvenienced myself or my schedule to serve someone else? When was the last time I did a task that wasn't mine to do but it needed to be done?

Imagine you're sitting in the dining halls and a friend who betrayed you came to sit at your table. How would you respond? How does Jesus teach us to respond in this passage?

LIVING ROOTED

Lord may we not just be hearers of the word but doers. This is a worthy prayer to add to our devotional lives. This week, engage with your Core Group in an act of service. Perhaps you can volunteer at a soup kitchen or pick up trash around New Haven. More than simply deciding on a one-time event, begin to think of how you can create rhythms of sacrificially serving others in your community in a way that reflects the love of Christ.



“Remain in Me.”



This week, we enter an intimate and emotionally-charged setting of what’s known as the Farewell Discourse (chapters 13 through 17). In our passage this week, we read Jesus instructing his disciples that, despite the betrayal of Judas in 13:21-30 and the troubles approaching in chapter 18, they must remain in him, even as a branch must remain in the vine in order to have fruitful life.

Verses 1-8 introduce the imagery of the vine while verse 9-17 apply it to a new command Jesus gave a couple chapters prior: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

What are we to do with this command to remain in the vine? In John 17:20, Jesus says “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message...” We find here that this farewell discourse was not simply for Jesus’s disciples then, but also for us now. We too—even at Yale—are the branches in the vine. We too—even at Yale—must remain in Christ despite the troubles and suffering. And if we remain in him, he will remain in us, also; we will always be able to draw on his life; the Father will always seek our fruitfulness.

Perhaps most exciting of all, we also can participate in Jesus’s glorious mission to glorify the Father. To quote the apostle Paul: “...God has chosen to make known...the glorious riches of this mystery, **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.**” (Colossians 1:27)

A more captivating purpose in life can scarcely be imagined.

This image of remaining in the vine can be complex, especially void of the cultural knowledge Jesus’s original hearers would have had. Read through the next page for additional context on this critical message.



The True Vine

This passage opens with the last of the great “I am” statements. Jesus proclaims “I am the true vine.” It’s important to note that he is not merely “the vine,” but rather “the true vine.” *What does this mean?*

Its significance can only be appreciated against the backdrop of the Old Testament idea of Israel as the vine or vineyard. Israel was the vine, but Jesus was the true vine. Whereas Israel would fail its calling, Jesus would fulfill a sinless destiny for the forgiveness of humanity. Where Israel exemplified a broken creation, Jesus would usher in a new creation.

This notion of true in the true vine is common in John, appearing 48 times and often used to characterize Jesus and his teaching. It is frequently used to describe something pertaining to Jesus in contrast with something earlier in Israel’s history:

Jesus is the true light. John 1:9	stands in contrast to—	John the Baptist came as a witness to the light. <i>John 1:9</i>
Jesus brings truth . John 1:17	stands in contrast to—	The Law of Moses <i>John 1:17</i>
The new manner of worship in spirit and truth . John 4:23-24	stands in contrast to—	Earlier temple worship in Jerusalem.
Jesus as the true bread from heaven. John 6:32	stands in contrast to—	The manna in the wilderness.

What then can we make of this deep symbolism? Jesus identifies with the failures of Israel, but being without sin, he transcends them, bearing fruit through his branches when Israel had previously been fruitless.

Remain



John 15:4 begins with a key word that occurs 40 times in John’s gospel: remain. The greek word for remain (meno/μένω) means simply to remain, abide, or dwell. Sometimes this word is used simply (like in John 1:38-39 when two disciples asked where Jesus was staying). But as we’ve come to learn about John, the words he uses are always infused with deeper meaning.

In this passage, John repeatedly uses remain/μένω to describe things as remaining mutually interior to one another:

- the Father remains in Jesus, and Jesus in the Father (14:10)
- disciples are to remain in the word, and the word is to remain in them (15:7)
- disciples are to remain in Jesus and Jesus in them (15:4)
- the relationship between the Father and Jesus is analogous to the relationship between Jesus and his disciples (15:9)

Since Jesus is soon departing, one of the major themes of the Farewell Discourse is the sending of the Holy Spirit, who will remain in them after his ascension. From this context, we are to understand the Holy Spirit as the means by which the disciples are to remain in Jesus, as is taught in 1 John 3:24.

With the anticipation of the coming Holy Spirit, we now have each person of the Trinity involved in this image: the Father is the vinedresser, the Son is the vine, and the Spirit is the means by which the branches are to remain in the vine.

John 15:1-17

Verse 1—

This passage opens with the last of Jesus's characteristic "I am" statements. Two weeks ago, we saw Jesus proclaim "I am the resurrection and the life." This week, Jesus proclaims "I am the true vine." This is significant as Jesus uses these phrases to claim to be more than a mere human, but God himself.

Verse 4—

The word translated "remain" (greek: meno μένω) is one of the Apostle John's favorite words. He uses it 34 times in the Gospel, and 19 times in his letters. The word meno means to dwell at one's own house, to stay as a guest in someone's home, to abide or to sustain unbroken fellowship with someone. To have a friend who abides is to always be present to help you in time of need.

Verse 7—

Is this verse saying we can ask for whatever we want in prayer? No. Instead, it's implying those close enough to the vine will know the heart of God and ask according to his good will.

Verse 9 to 11—

These verses develop some of the themes and parallels in this passage — particularly the relationship between Jesus and his disciples (one we also have access to as his disciples). What are some of these themes?

1. The Father's love for the Son is the pattern for the Son's love for his disciples (9).
2. The Son's obedience to the Father is a pattern for the disciple's obedience to the Son (10).
3. The need to remain in my love is repeated 3 times in verse 9-10.
4. The Son's joy is the basis for the disciple's joy.

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. 9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

OBSERVATION &
INTERPRETATION

Perform a close reading of this passage. What symbols and motifs stand out to you?

What does it mean that the gardener (the father) prunes the branches? What happens when the branches are pruned? If this is a metaphor for spiritual growth, how might this look in our lives?

What does bearing fruit for God demonstrate to the world (see verse 8)?

We know that Jesus taught this allegory of the vine to his disciples shortly before his crucifixion—why do you think this was one of his final lessons?

APPLICATION

How do we remain in Christ daily?

What are some examples of good fruit, and how can we continue to bear it?

LIVING ROOTED

This week, spend some time in silent meditation. In silence, we let go of our agendas and allow communion with God to become the core of our life. *Why do we do this?* Pastor and author Rich Villodas says “we need regular times of silent, contemplative prayer because it helps us to move beyond relating to God in transactional, utilitarian ways.” In essence, we all need to be reminded that God is not a cosmic vending machine who gives us a treat when we spend time with him. Cultivating rhythms of silence reminds us that proximity and time with God without any transactional motives is at the heart of abiding.



“It is finished.”

John 19:1-37

Each of the four gospel accounts move soberly towards the ultimate climax—the passion and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah (it’s this very climax that makes a “gospel” a gospel). In this week’s passage, we see Jesus crucified on a cross—the fulfillment of the hopes in every passage we’ve studied as a Core Group. **Week by week we’ve seen glimpses that are now fully realized of what Christ has done for us:**

Week 1

“We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Because of his great love, Jesus has taken on flesh, entered into our world, and secured for us grace upon grace upon grace.

Week 2

When the groom ran out of provisions, Jesus met him in his place of shame and transformed that place by his mercy and his grace! He takes the jars of ceremonial cleansing and fills them with new wine. When Jesus was on the cross, he was turning water into wine—bringing redemption, restoration and salvation.

Week 3

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him” (John 3:14-15). We don’t receive new birth because of what we do, but because of what God did for us in Christ, taking the wrath of our sin and giving us new life!

Week 4

Through healing the lame man, Jesus reminds us that we are helpless and hopeless, paralyzed and dying in our sin. Jesus comes to us and by His grace gives us New Life, gives us true Sabbath rest!

Week 5

In this final sign, Jesus displays his true identity as the resurrection and the life, and also points toward his own death. A death where Jesus would take the punishment for our sin, and through his own resurrection, demonstrate his victory over sin and the grave!

Week 6

Jesus demonstrates that through death comes new life and new creation for all who believe! He subverts traditional notions of glory and conquers shame and death on the cross.

Week 7

In assuming the posture of a servant and washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus is foreshadowing the ultimate sacrifice he would make on their behalf—the ultimate cleansing of their bodies and souls as the sacrificial lamb would who take away the sins of the world.

Week 8

Jesus’s foreshadows what he calls the greatest act of love: *“to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”* (John 15:13) Through the laying down of his own life, Jesus creates a way for us to remain in him forever.

If this doesn’t stir up emotion in you, maybe it stirs up questions: *why? Why did Jesus do it? Why did he let God forsake Him? Why did he put himself in a position where all this could happen?* The right answer seems inadequate: Jesus did it to glorify his father. But he has been glorifying his father since the beginning of time. *Why come to earth and be crucified to glorify his father? Why endure that?* **The answer is simple: For you. For us.** ◦

John 19:1-37

1 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2 The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe 3 and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face. 4 Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." 5 When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" 6 As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him." 7 The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God." 8 When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, 9 and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. 10 "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." 12 From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." 13 When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). 14 It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon. "Here is your king," Pilate said to

John 19:1-37

the Jews. 15 But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered. 16 Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. 17 Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. 19 Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of nazareth, the king of the Jews. 20 Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. 21 The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.” 22 Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.” 23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.” This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” So this is what the soldiers did. 25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” 27 and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.”

Verse 18—

All four Gospels mention that Jesus was crucified with two others, but only John puts Jesus at the center. It’s hard to imagine the gospel writer John (who uses Isaiah 53 so effectively in John 12) is not thinking about Isaiah 53:12: Jesus “was numbered with the transgressors.”

John 19:1-37

From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. 28 Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. 31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. 32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. 33 But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. 35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. 36 These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," 37 and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

Verse 30 to 31—

In a subtle nod to John's overarching theme of creation and new creation, some theologians notice an interesting connection to Genesis 1. On the 6th day of the week, God finished creation and rested on the sabbath. Interestingly enough, we see Jesus here, as his death secures a new creation for all who believe say "it is finished." We learn in verse 31 that the following day was "a day of rest." Fitting that John's prologue and climax would reference the creation (and thus, the new creation) story.

OBSERVATION &
INTERPRETATION

As you read this passage out loud try to imagine yourself in the scene. What are you noticing? What are you feeling? Are there elements of this passage that you haven't noticed before? Feel free to spend some time silently reading the passage again.

Why was it necessary for Jesus to die on a cross? What did his death accomplish?

How would you put into words the significance of what Jesus has done?

APPLICATION

If we believe that Jesus's death on the cross atones for our sins and gives us new life, how does that change how we live at Yale?

LIVING ROOTED

This week take some time to write out what the gospel is and what it means in your life. Share this with a friend and consider posting it at your desk as a reminder of what Jesus has done for you.



*“The disciples were overjoyed
when they saw the Lord.”*



John 20:1-31

But wait! There's more! For John, nothing could be more disastrous than to consider the cross in isolation from the resurrection. He is not alone in this. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:14-17:

“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised...And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”

Jesus did in fact rise from the dead, just as he said he would. Amongst other things that he said and did before his ascension to the Father, he gave his disciples a command (not unlike the “Great Commission” counterpart in Matthew): *“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”* And with that he breathed on them and said, *“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”*

In this ultimate sign Jesus secures a new creation for all of humanity to come, and a renewal in our hearts and lives now.

John 20:1-31

Verse 1—

Each of the four Gospels introduce their resurrection accounts by specifying “*the first day of the week*” (as opposed to the third day after the resurrection). What does this mean? It could speak to the deeper truth that Jesus’s resurrection is the start of something new. Also noteworthy in this verse is the fact that John has taken great care to honor Mary Magdalene’s resurrection account—in spite of the fact she is a woman. An astute reader would remember that God delights to use what the world views as foolish to shame the wise that no one should boast (1 Cor 1:27-29).

Verse 4—

A casual reading might find this verse quite humorous—as if John felt the need to tell all of us he is faster than Peter! However, the simplest reading argues that every detail in this resurrection account (even the younger John’s swiftness compared to the older Peter) gives evidence to the readers that this account is true.

Verse 15—

Pondering these two questions after the fact, Mary could not help seeing these questions in a different light. The first (why are you crying?) becomes a mild rebuke; the second (who is it you are looking for) becomes an invitation to reflect on the kind of Messiah she was expecting. Despite Mary’s great devotion to him, her estimate of who Jesus is was far too small—a lesson for all of us.

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” 3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. 11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 13 They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” “They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15 He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). 17 Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them,

John 20:1-31

Verse 19—

The significance of the locked doors is two-fold: on one hand, the disciples no doubt feared for their lives after seeing their teacher crucified. The function of the locked doors in John's gospel is to speak to the miraculous nature of Jesus's appearance among his disciples.

“I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” 18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her. 19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” 24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” 26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” 28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” 30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION

Perform a close reading of this passage. What do you notice? What stands out?

Re-read John 20:21-23 looking at each statement closely. What command is Jesus giving his disciples? What does this mean for them? What does it mean for us?

How does Jesus respond to Thomas' doubts? Do you think the disciple's moniker of "Doubting Thomas" is fair? How would you have responded?

Why did John write this gospel?

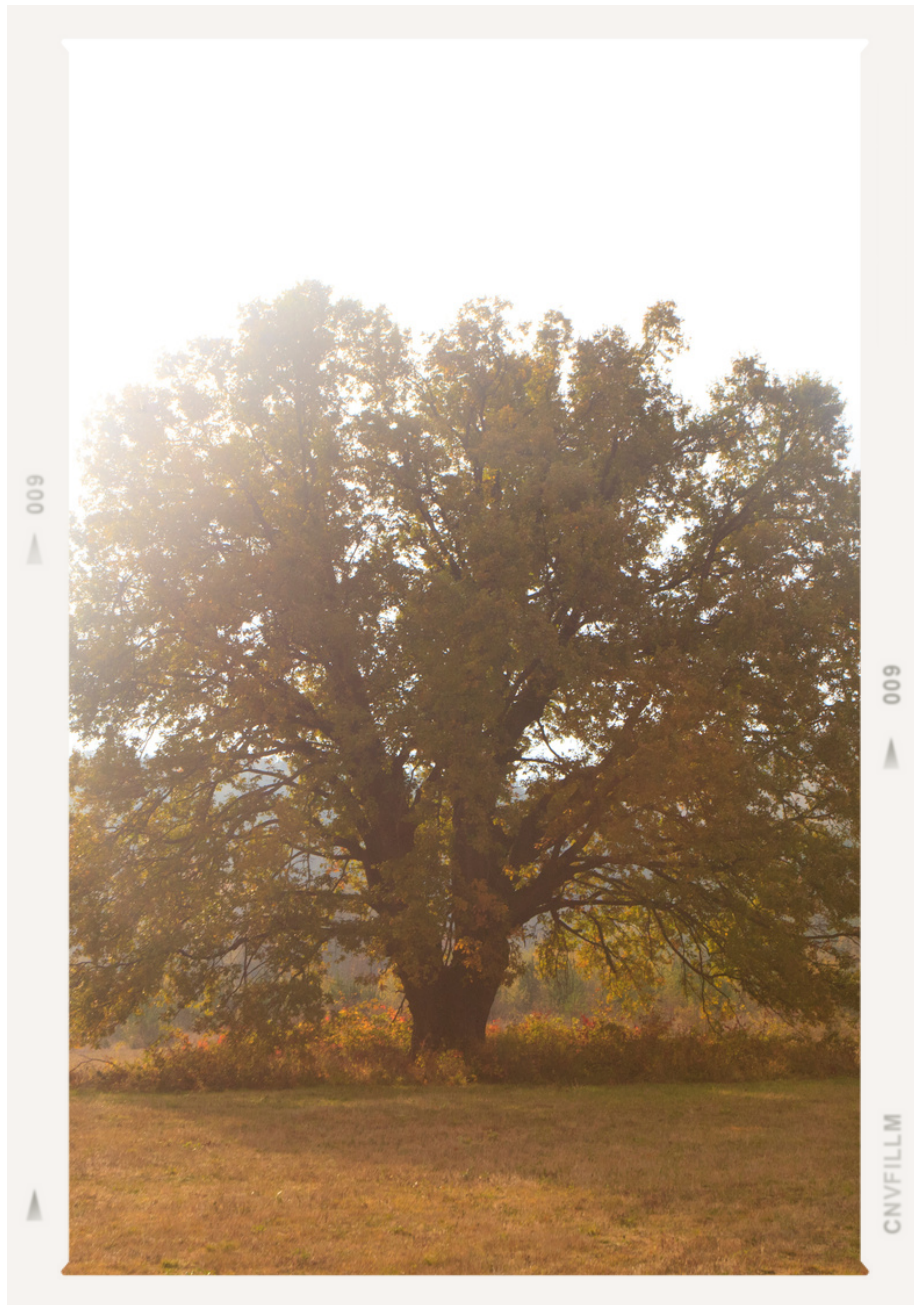
APPLICATION

What are the implications of the resurrection on your life? How does that change how we live? Does it?

What has been your biggest takeaway from studying the gospel of John this semester? What questions do you still want to explore? What things do you still want to pray about?

LIVING ROOTED

What an incredible thing to serve the resurrected Christ! This week, think about ways you can practice the discipline of worship. Perhaps curate a playlist of worship songs (you can do this as a Core Group!), perhaps write out acts of praise to God, or perhaps read through the Psalms. Whatever the medium, create regular rhythms of worship to God.



"...but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

John 20:31