

Discoveries
in
John's Gospel

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Leader's Guide

Fundamental Assumptions

The Bible

- The Bible is God's Word.
- The Bible has and will establish its own authority.
- The Bible can and will, through the work of the Holy Spirit, become the power of God unto Salvation.

The Study

- The format is that of a discussion. Men and women join the group on the understanding that the leader is not there to preach or teach but to chair the discussions.
- The leader will introduce questions for discussion and help the group to keep on track but will not provide answers.
- The Bible will be studied, as any other book would be, without seeking to justify its authorship. This avoids arguments about whether it is really God's Word.

The Secular World

In our society many know little about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible or the Gospel. They have no church connection and are a long way from faith. For them, coming to an understanding of their need of Christ as Saviour is a process and may be a slow and gradual one.

We need to build bridges with men and women like this and cultivate relationships with them before we can share the Gospel.

Men and women need to accept us and trust us before they will accept the message we bring.

You can only trust someone to the extent that you know them.

This Bible study is intended for people with whom bridges have been built, and encourages them to find out what God says in His Word.

John's Gospel has been chosen because John says . . .

*"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."
John 20:31*

Religious but not Saved

In contrast many in the local church situation are church going and religious, but have not made any real commitment to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

These study notes provide general guidance on how to organise and run Evangelistic Bible Study Groups and a detailed study guide, chapter by chapter, based on John's Gospel.

These notes are intended for the group leader only. Group members do not need a copy.

General Principles

The Studies

Each study takes the form of an open discussion about the text of a chapter of John's Gospel. The leader will introduce questions, one at a time, for discussion.

The group will discuss these questions among themselves and, with the leader's guidance, try and seek answers.

The studies may seem simple to believers but are geared to unsaved men and women who cannot understand deep spiritual truth.

*"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."
1 Corinthians 2:14*

The Questions

The questions do not seek to cover all the truth in John's Gospel but are designed to focus on two key issues . . .

Who the Lord Jesus Christ is.

What He wants from the unbeliever.

Prayer

Prayer backing throughout the whole study will be vital.

Bibles

It may be helpful to provide paper back Bibles for everybody. If you do and group members are unfamiliar with the Bible you can then use page numbers and avoid embarrassing people.

A modern translation is probably best, e.g., New International Version.

The Venue

The venue should normally be the neutral setting of a private home, especially with a secular group.

If the group is church based then more options are open to you. In this case potential members will be comfortable with the church premises.

Expectations

Wherever you have the study, keep it informal and comfortable.

- Don't be concerned if initial progress seems slow, remember it is a process.
- For the first few weeks there may be arguments about evolution, so called errors in the Bible and so on. These will usually disappear within a few weeks.

The Basis of the Study

When you invite someone to the study you need to explain . . .

- What the study is about.
- That the study will take the form of an open discussion about one Book in the Bible, under the guidance of a leader.
- That the leader will not preach or provide answers but is there to act as a guide and co-ordinator.
- That the group will be free to express their opinions and to disagree if they wish.
- That the study will be for a fixed length, normally an hour. Don't overrun the agreed time.

It would be good to have a cup of tea/coffee afterwards but give anybody who needs to leave the freedom to do so. The informal atmosphere provides good opportunities for personal chats.

How it Will Work

The principles behind this study allow people to come to terms with spiritual truth, and its application, over a period of time. You don't need to press for a decision too soon or embarrass people by asking pointed questions.

Remember you are not there to teach or answer questions. This is particularly important with a secular group and for the early studies in the series. God's Spirit will reveal truth in His own way. If questions are asked or issues raised which cannot be answered from the text under study or from previous chapters put them on a 'List of Deferred Questions.' Make a personal note of them and pick them up as they occur, in their natural order, as the study progresses. The answer will turn up eventually.

Keep applications in general terms. People will come to an understanding in their own good time. Be careful, also, about direct questions to individuals, unless you are sure that the person involved will not be embarrassed.

At a later stage, when you have more freedom to take part, questions may be raised which you can't answer. The best thing to do is to simply say, "I don't know but I will find out for next week." Such an answer will enhance rather than harm your credibility.

The group make-up is very important. The study is primarily for unbelievers but it is helpful to have a number of Christians there as well, to join in the discussions.

Brief the Christians not to dominate the discussions and use your place as leader to give free expression to everybody.

Beware of using evangelical terms. Words like 'sanctification,' 'believing,' 'faith,' 'repent,' don't mean very much to secular men and women. Read the glossary through and try not to use words which may not be properly understood.

There are increasing amounts of material on leading small groups, including our own material and seminar, which you may find helpful if you are not experienced in this field.

Encourage the quiet group members to participate and gently but firmly control those who are too vocal. Usually the most difficult to deal with are those who talk too much and don't give others a chance.

In these circumstances, you could say, **looking at others in the group** . . .

“What do you think about . . .?”

“Maybe we could hear some other views.”

“Thanks . . . for that comment, what does anyone else think about it?”

With a view to the expansion of these Bible Studies it would be helpful to train a leader as you lead the group. He or she could sit in on the studies and gain first hand experience for themselves.

Encourage the Christians in the group to build bridges with other unbelievers so that they can be drawn into this study or even form part of a new group with your newly trained leader. Because of the nature of John's, folk can join in at any time.

For a fuller treatment of the principles behind this study consult Jim Peterson's book, '*Living Proof*,' published by NAVPRESS. This was formerly published as two books, '*Evangelism as a Lifestyle*' and '*Evangelism for our Generation*' also by NAVPRESS.

Your Part

Questions are your primary tool in each study. Your objective in using questions is to draw the group out and to encourage them to think. To try and help them to understand what the Bible is saying. To guide them to the right conclusions. The Holy Spirit will apply God's Word to their lives.

You should not, especially in the early studies, answer questions yourself. If you are asked questions explain that you are not there as an authority, that it is a discussion group, and you don't want to be the so called expert. Later, when the group learns to trust you, you can relax this rule and make comments.

If you teach from the start, the effectiveness of the study will be greatly reduced. The Bible is God's Word so trust it. It is a little scary but if you leave the Word and the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of men and women you will be astonished at the results.

Questions in General

In this Bible Study you will find questions provided for each study. These are designed to focus the group's attention on different elements of truth. As the group considers these you should use your own questions to help the group come to understand the Scriptures for themselves.

Note

The use of questions in small groups is covered in some depth in the seminar on Leading Small Groups. The following notes are adapted from the associated resource manual.

Questions are one of the best tools you have to guide and stimulate discussion in the group. There are many different types of questions each with its own place in the discussions. To help you we want first of all to look at the sort of questions you could ask and why you might do so.

Observation, Interpretation and Application

Virtually all Bible study requires three fundamental disciplines. Observation, interpretation and application.

Looking - Observation

Discovery questions help us find out what God's Word says. Often called observation this involves finding out about the passage and what it says. Bible study should involve looking at the context, background, culture, grammar, structure, writer and the circumstances in which the passage was written and received. The degree to which your group can do this may be limited but it would be helpful for you to add background information from time to time.

You could ask questions like, "What do you see in this passage? What are the facts? What can we find out about . . . ?"

Thinking - Interpretation

Thinking about the things which have been discovered leads to an understanding of the meaning of the passage and how the facts are related to one another.

Here the focus is on meaning. We have identified what the passage says, now we consider what was meant, what the writer intended to convey to his original readers and what God wants us to understand today.

In John 10:9 Jesus says He is a 'gate.' What does that mean? He uses the word 'gate' but does He mean this literally or in some other way? Can you see the difference between . . .

"I am the gate." This is **Observation**

Eternal life comes through Jesus alone. This is **Meaning**

Application - What the Passage Means to us Today

Having carefully observed the passage and come to an understanding of the writer's intent and meaning we can continue to consider how the Biblical truth applies to daily life today.

Questions are along the line of, "How does it work?" Note we are not trying to make the Bible relevant because the Bible is relevant. For those who read it and heed it, it changes lives.

Observation, interpretation and application are all vital to study of the Scriptures. Application is the end result of all the study and you will probably ask questions something like this.

"How does this teaching effect us? What changes do you and I need to make in our lives?"

The boundaries between these types of questions may overlap somewhat. Discovery and understanding questions are often similar. But be careful, we often go straight to 'understanding' without adequate investigation of the what the passage actually says and the background to it. We need to know Scripture in its grammatical and historical context before we can understand it for today.

Some will take a discovery question and answer it as an understanding question. So when using your questions, be prepared for answers of the type you might not expect. Remember what we said about your role in guiding and redirecting discussion.

Questions in Particular

More specific types of questions are considered now. **These will be your principle tools throughout the studies.**

Launching Questions

A launching question is one which is used to initiate a discussion or illicit a response. It simply directs the group to one element of the passage under discussion. The launching questions you find in the notes will usually be your starting place.

A launching question often begins with, "What . . ."

"What has this verse(s) to say about Jesus?"

"What was John's reaction to Jesus when he first saw Him?"

"What do you think about . . .?"

Guiding Questions

Guiding questions are used to keep a discussion moving in a predetermined direction, or to redirect it back when it has gone off track.

A guiding question draws attention to what **you want** to focus on, perhaps to explore some element of truth.

It may be designed to redirect thought back to the proper topic if an individual or even the whole group have got involved in a red herring.

Guiding questions can be focused directly on the content of the discussion. For example . . .

"What do you think it means for us to grow in grace?"

"What is the difference between submission and obedience?"

"If this is true, what about . . .?"

"Why do you think that?"

or they can be focused more on the group members.

For example . . .

"Who else would like to comment on that?"

"How does John's comment relate to what Claire said earlier?"

or they can redirect. For example . . .

"This is all very interesting but the question was . . ."

"What light does verse three shed on our discussion?"

"What do you think Jesus was getting at?"

Summarising Questions

Summaries are very helpful throughout the study. They seek to highlight the essence of the discussion so far. It is often helpful to have someone in the group do it. Not only does this involve the group but it gives you a feel for the level of understanding within the group. Did the group understand what you intended?

A summary should be brief, and highlight the essence of the discussion which has just taken place.

Summarising in this way helps to maintain people's interest, prevents unnecessary side-tracks, and clarifies the issues under discussion, helping the group's understanding.

You could say . . .

“Claire would you summarise the discussion about . . .?”

“Jim would you briefly sum up what we have learned so far?”

“How would you put this into your own words?”

“How has your knowledge of Jesus changed?”

Closed Questions

Closed questions are questions which require only, “Yes,” “No,” or a very brief one word answer. You should generally aim to avoid closed questions. They very rarely stimulate discussion and should only be used for special purposes e.g., helping someone, who is shy, express themselves in a safe way.

Remember if you ask a closed question the ball will be thrown back to you immediately. Some of the questions in the study are closed questions, look for them.

It is surprising how often closed questions are asked when a simple rewording would make all the difference.

“Jim, do you agree with what Ruth just said,” is an example of a closed question.

It would be better . . .

“Jim would you tell us what you think about this verse?”

Sometimes, however, closed questions are very useful. They can be used to great effect to make a point, or to draw out quieter people who may feel more secure in answering a question which has a limited range of responses. This can be less threatening.

Another variation on the closed question is the rhetorical question, to which the answer is not required because it is self-evident.

“Did this escape God's notice, then?”

Open Questions

Open questions are questions which could have a variety of answers. Good open questions take some thought to produce, but the dividends they yield in a discussion are well worth the effort. Examples of open questions are . . .

“In what ways could we apply this truth to ourselves?”

“What are the implications of this passage?”

Note

This study in John's Gospel is not as exhaustive as it might be with a Christian group. But it seeks to focus the mind of the unbeliever on who Christ is and what He wants them to do. Remember that growth in understanding will be gradual so don't be unduly concerned if some in the group are slow. Coming to Christ is often a process before it becomes a decision. Let the Word of God do its own work.

The First Night

Plans

1. Make sure everybody knows the time and place.
2. Remember to welcome everybody, especially strangers.
3. Ask everybody to introduce themselves, preferably first names.
4. Provide or make sure everyone has a Bible.

The Study

Explain the nature of the study and the ground rules, what you will be doing.

1. The study will normally last one hour.
2. The group will look at one chapter of John's Gospel each night.
3. The leader will introduce questions to help guide the discussions.
4. The group will study what the text says and try to understand its meaning without arguments in defence of the Bible or otherwise.
5. The leader is not there as a teacher but to co-ordinate the questions and guide the group as they seek answers.
6. All are free to express their own views and disagree.
7. There will be tea and coffee at the end for anyone who wishes to stay.

As you start each section of study it is a good idea to read through the passage to be discussed. It is helpful to have each person read a verse and let them get used to the sound of their own voices.

In the Bible study notes there are usually helpful comments with each question. Additional verse references are also given for you. Don't read these out as part of the question but use them if the group has difficulty finding the right part of the passage or the right answers.

You will need to decide for yourself when to leave one question and go on to the next. Keep the study moving. It is better if people wish you had spent more time rather than less.

Don't worry if you are unable to complete all the questions. Stop on time. If you are finished early then close the formal meeting and allow informal discussion over tea and coffee.

You must read each chapter before the study night. Make sure you understand the questions and how they relate to the text. Be prepared to guide the group to other verses in the chapter which will shed light on the questions.

You are free to leave out, modify or add questions. Make sure that you understand them and are comfortable with them. The ones we have provided are by no means the only ones or even the best ones. They are the edited results after running several groups.

As the study will include unbelievers, maybe with no church connections, don't embarrass them with public prayer. Do your praying before you come and after you leave.

Use of a Dictionary

Since you are restricted, initially at any rate, in how much you can say the group may have difficulty in understanding terms, especially theological ones.

It is very helpful to have a good English Dictionary on hand and to encourage the group to use it. The definitions are not necessarily complete but they help and it a good practise to teach.

Glossary

There is a glossary at the end of this booklet after the studies on chapter 21.

Study One

John One

- Questions for the group have a bullet mark in front of them.

Notes for you are in this format.

John chapter one is fairly heavy. It is probably worth warning the group of this and explaining that it gets easier in later chapters.

Read right through each section of the chapter as you come to study it. For example, as you start Study One read John 1:1-18. Then when you get to section two read John 1:19-34. It is good to have each person read one verse.

Remember to allow the group to look for the answers and only if they have real difficulties should you help them. Learn to be comfortable with silences. People need time to think.

It may help you to mark Closed Questions in the notes. These usually lead into other more open questions. Stop on time, even if you have not completed all the questions.

Discussion Questions

1 John 1:1-18

- 'The Word' occurs four times in this short section. Who or what do you think the Word refers to?

See verses 1 and 14. The Word became flesh therefore a man - the Lord Jesus.

- How does one become a child of God?

See verse 12.

- What do you think it means to receive Christ?
- What do you think it means to believe in Christ?

The words receive and believe are theological words. The group may not fully understand their meaning. As a first step ask someone to read definitions from a good English Dictionary. See the glossary.

- Who has made the Father known to us? How is this possible?

See verse 18.

2 John 1:19-34

Explain to the group that 'John' in this passage is not the writer of the account but is commonly known as John the Baptist.

Read these verses through.

- What do you think of John's reaction to Jesus when he first saw Him?

See verse 29. He recognised Him as the Lamb of God because God had sent Him as a witness. See also verses 6, 7. Why Lamb?

- As whom did John identify Jesus?

See also verse 34. The Lamb of God, the Son of God. Draw out the close relationship of a Son.

- How did John know who Jesus was?

God had given John a sign, the sign was fulfilled. See verses 31, 32, 33. Don't be in too big hurry if some don't grasp these truths immediately. They will occur again and again.

3 John 1:35-51

Read this section of the passage. This passage tells how five men came to find Jesus.

- How did the first two disciples know who Jesus was?

See verses 35-37. Through what John said about Jesus.

- What was the outcome of John's comments to the two disciples?

They wanted to follow Jesus as John had previously told them that He was a Teacher.

- What commitment did Jesus ask of Philip?

Verse 43, that Philip should follow Him.

- Do you think the invitation to 'Follow Jesus' is open to everybody today?

Encourage discussion.

- What does it mean to follow Jesus?

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the session.

Encourage the group to read John chapter two before the next meeting.

Study Two

John Two

Discussion Questions

1 John 2:1-11

Read these eleven verses, one verse each, round the group.

- What problem arose during the wedding and what did Jesus do about it?

See verse 3. The wine ran out.

- What makes the story believable or otherwise for you?

Try not to get involved in a discussion about whether the wine was alcoholic or not. The whole story has ring of truth about it but don't insist on agreement.

- What strikes you in the dialogue between Jesus and His mother, verses 3-6?

Mary's total trust that Jesus would solve the problem.

- In chapter 1, the disciples made a decision to follow Jesus. In what way do you think this incident helped or hindered their commitment to Him?

Verses 11 says that as a result they believed in Him. They were learning about Him through personal experience.

2. John 2:12-22

Read these verses through.

- Why do you think did Jesus act as He did?

The Passover was a religious feast of the Jews. They came to Jerusalem to celebrate it and for spiritual cleansing. The temple merchants were exploiting the situation for commercial ends.

- What relationship with God does Jesus claim?

Verse 16, Father and Son.

- In what sense is God the Father of Jesus?

- The Jews demanded a sign to confirm Christ's authority. What sign did He promise them?

What Temple is Jesus speaking of? You will find the answer in verse 22 where the disciples link His resurrection with the prophecy.

- Do you think from this narrative that Jesus knew that He was to die and then rise from the dead?

Don't worry if some cast doubt on the resurrection. It comes up again later.

- Supposing, for the moment, that Jesus did rise from the dead. What is the significance for us today of this event and of Christ's prior knowledge of what would happen?

Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ there is no Christian faith. For if He did not rise, then He and the apostles are liars, there is no hope of eternal life for us and no forgiveness for our sins. For your own understanding see 1 Corinthians 15:12-22.

3. John 2:23-25

Read the passage through.

- What did Jesus do during the Passover feast?

Verse 23, signs - presumably healing the sick.

- What was the response of those who saw these events?

As a result of His miracles many believed.

- In verse 11, the disciples believed, in verse 23 the people believed. Why did each group believe?

- Did all believe in the same way? If not, what do you think was the difference?

Each group believed because of the signs which Jesus did. The belief of the disciples resulted in them following Jesus. This was not true of the people in general who were very fickle. Draw out that Biblical belief involves acting on knowledge.

- What do you think Jesus knew about men and women?

See verse 25 their sinfulness. Mark 7:21-22.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the session.

Encourage the group to read John chapter three before the next meeting.

Study Three

John 3

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, a man of authority. He came to Jesus, in secret, at night, to question Him.

Discussion Questions

1. John 3:1-15

Read these verses through.

- What did Nicodemus already know about Jesus when he came to Him?

Nicodemus thought Jesus had come from God because of the signs He did.

- Why do you think Nicodemus came at night?

Many today are too shy or ashamed to show their interest in spiritual matters. Encourage the group to discuss why.

- What is impossible without being born anew or born again?

See verses 3 and 5.

- What do you think Jesus meant by the phrase 'the Kingdom of God?'

See verse 5 also. This is not an easy concept to explain to unbelievers. Best kept in simple terms, i.e. to become a Christian, to understand Biblical truth.

- What did Nicodemus think Jesus meant by the phrase 'born again?'

Nicodemus had no concept of spiritual life. He couldn't understand Christ's analogy.

- What do you think Nicodemus did not understand?

Nicodemus was thinking of physical and material things while Jesus was thinking of spiritual matters.

- What does the term to be 'born again' actually mean?

- Jesus made extraordinary claims in verses 11-12. What did He mean?

He claimed to speak from personal knowledge of spiritual matters on earth and in heaven.

- Who is the Son of Man and where did He come from?

Verse 13. The Lord Jesus is the Son of Man and came from heaven, from the presence of the Father.

- What did Jesus state would happen to the Son of Man?

You will probably need to explain briefly the story which is found in Numbers 21:4-9.

- What are the implications in the last two questions as to who Jesus is?

Allow general discussion about Christ

2. John 3:16-21

Read these verses through.

- Why did Jesus come into the world?

See verse 17, that the world might be saved. Explain theological words in simple terms. See the glossary.

- What is promised to those who believe?

- What is eternal life?

Guide the discussion in non theological terms.

- In these verses what do you think 'believe' means? Is it just mental assent to a truth or doctrine?

Believing in Jesus is more than just mental assent. I believe that aircraft from Belfast to London, but to get to London from Belfast I must buy a ticket and board a flight. Action must be added to belief to be effective.

2. John 3:22-36

Read the passage through.

- Who is John the Baptist speaking about in this section?

See verses 27-30.

- What other factor is linked in verse 36 with belief?

Obedience, doing what the Bible teaches us to do.

- What are the implications of all this for us?

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the session.

Encourage the group to read John chapter four before the next meeting.

Study Four

John 4

Explain to the group that in Old Testament times, the twelve tribes were split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Israel rebelled against God and intermarried with their neighbours. In Christ's day these people were known as Samaritans and the Jews would have nothing to do with them.

Read the passage through as usual.

Discussion Questions

1. John 4:1-30

- Jesus offered 'living' water to the woman at the well. What claims did He make for this water?

Verses 14, 15. Jesus uses natural needs to teach spiritual lessons.

- What did Jesus mean by 'living water'?

Spiritual birth and life. In John 7:38-39 this idea is linked to the Holy Spirit.

- What thirst is Jesus talking about in verse 14? What does it mean?

Real thirst is a dreadful craving which becomes a dominant need. Only in Christ can our spiritual longings be really satisfied.

- When Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus, He used everyday words, like birth, to explain spiritual truth. Here He does the same thing. Why did the woman not understand?

This woman had no comprehension of spiritual truth.

- Jesus made some very personal comments about this woman's lifestyle. She in response changed the subject from this personal line to one about religion in general. Why do you think she did this?

We all tend to evade responsibility for our sin. Discuss why people today might do this.

Other questions: Why do you think we are unwilling to admit our guilt? Do you think people are concerned about what others think?

- What does Jesus claim is the essence of true worship?

See verses 21-24.

- Who did Jesus claim to be in this conversation?

Verse 25-26. The Messiah.

- What did the Jews understand by the name Messiah?

- Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. As we think about Him, there seem to be only two choices. Either Jesus was a fraud or He is God. What do you think?

Encourage free expression of peoples reaction to Christ.

2. John 4:31-42

Read these verses through.

- What did Jesus consider His food to be?

Doing His Father's will.

➤ What sort of relationship does this imply that Jesus had with the Father?

➤ What is the harvest?

Men and women who need to follow Jesus.

➤ Who are the reapers?

Christians who share the message with others.

➤ What conclusions did the Samaritans come to in relation to Jesus?

*Verses 39, 42. Some believed through the woman, others through Christ.
The conclusion was the same He was the Christ.*

➤ Do you agree with them?

Allow discussion about individual perceptions as to Christ's identity.

3. John 4:43-54

Read these verses through.

➤ Jesus told this official that his son would live. The text says in verse 50 that the man believed and went on his way. In verse 53 he seems to have believed in a different way. What do you think may have happened?

This official went from believing that Jesus could heal to a real personal commitment which involved his whole family.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the session.

Encourage the group to read John chapter five before the next meeting.

Study 5

John 5

1. John 5:1-18

Read these verses through.

We are told that an angel of the Lord, from time to time, disturbed the water of the pool and the first person into the pool was healed.

Discussion Questions

- After healing him Jesus warned this man lest something worse should befall him. What could be worse than 38 years infirmity?

Reread John 3:18. Nothing could be worse than eternity in hell.

- Jesus told him not to sin again. Is it possible to stop sinning? If not why not?

See verse 14. No one since Adam has been able to wholly keep God's Law except Jesus. See Romans 3:19-20.

- Did Jesus sin by healing on the Sabbath?

Allow the group to air their views briefly.

- On what basis do you make your judgement?

It is likely that the group judged from a personal viewpoint. Steer them towards the idea that the Bible is the absolute in relation to what is right and what is wrong.

- On what basis did the Jews judge?

The Jews judged on the basis of their own rules and regulations. See Mark 7:7-8.

- What relationship with God was Jesus accused of claiming?

See verse 18. The Jews saw Jesus as one who claimed equality with God, i.e. He was God. Help the group to focus on who they think Jesus is?

2. John 5:19-29

Read these verses through.

- What promise did Jesus make in verse 24?
- What do we have to do to claim these promises?

Belief involves acting on knowledge.

- In verses 28-29, Jesus seems to be making a prophecy for the future. What do you think He means?

The dead will rise some day, some to be rewarded, others to be judged. Focus on what it means to be judged.

3. John 5:30-47

Read these verses through.

- What did Jesus claim was a witness to the fact that He had been sent by God the Father?

Verses 36 and 37. The Father bore witness. As did His works and the Scriptures.

- In verses 37-40 Jesus made comments about His listeners. List some of them.

The listeners didn't have God's Word abiding in them nor did they believe Jesus. The listeners searched the Scriptures for eternal life. The listeners refused to come to Christ to get eternal life.

- Why did men in Christ's day and do men today refuse to believe in Christ?

Many reasons but fundamentally they want to run their own lives.

- Who is able to give eternal life?

Apply the truth that only Jesus can give eternal life.

- How has this chapter added to your understanding about Jesus?

Does everybody in the group see Him as the Christ?

- What do you think Jesus expects men and women to do?

Be sure to keep this question in general terms. Trust to the Bible to do its own work in God's time. Don't push too soon but encourage application. If you have been using the Bridge Illustration you could say, "Some day I hope some of you will cross over the Bridge," and leave it at that. Sow the seed, "Some day I hope you . . ."

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter six before the next meeting.

Study 6

John 6

Discussion Questions

1. John 6:1-21

Read the passage through.

- As you have read the story of the feeding of the five thousand, go back to verses 10 and 11 again. What is the passage saying?

Jesus really did distribute 5 loaves and 2 fish to five thousand men. Do all the group accept this account? Are attitudes to Jesus changing?

- What was the conclusion of the crowds about what had happened?

See verses 14, 15. They were there.

- Why do you think they wanted to make Jesus King?

Food, material benefits. They didn't really get the spiritual significance.

- What happened as the disciples rowed across the lake?

See verses 16-21. Draw out Christ's authority over the elements.

2. John 6:22-40

Read the passage through.

- What reason did Jesus give for the people's interest in Him?

Verse 26. For material needs.

- Where did Jesus urge them to place their priorities?

Primary responsibility, believe in God?

- What did Jesus say was the work of God?

Believing in Jesus, active following.

- The people demanded signs before they would believe in Jesus. Do we do take the same attitude today?

Ask the group, would men today believe if they saw miracles. Probably not, see Luke 16:31. Explore the issue. Is it commitment? Is it cost? Is it not in the end a question of choice?

- What claims did Jesus make for Himself in verses 35-40?

The three most powerful human urges are for life itself, for food and for water.

Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." Jesus had come from heaven bringing salvation and eternal life for believers. John 6:35

- These are amazing claims. Make sure the group grasp what this section is teaching.

3. John 6.41-71

Read the passage through.

- The people were unwilling to follow Jesus. Were they afraid? Had they closed minds?

Discoveries in John's Gospel

- What, do you think, keeps people from following Jesus?

Don't be too direct but encourage application. What keeps the group from following Jesus?

Throughout the first chapters of John, Jesus has used different natural things to try and explain spiritual truth. In this section there are a few difficult verses.

- What did Jesus say about His body and blood?
- What did Jesus mean by these references to eating His flesh and drinking his blood?

This is a very difficult passage. You may not get real understanding at this point. If not put these on the deferred list and explain at the end of the studies at the most appropriate time.

- Many of the disciples took Christ's teaching about His body and blood literally and drew back. What was Peter's reaction?

Verse 68. That there was no other person to whom they could go.

This is probably a good time to share the Bridge Illustration. Share it as an illustration of the teaching of John's Gospel.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter seven before the next meeting.

Study 7

John 7

Jesus as this chapter opens, was keeping a low profile in Galilee because of the threats against His life. He Himself said, "My time has not yet come." Later He did go to Jerusalem, but in secret. The focus of this chapter is on who Jesus is. The people and leaders had many ideas.

Discussion Questions

1. John 7:1-24

Read the passage through.

- What did the brothers (actually half brothers) of Jesus urge Him to do?

Verses 3, 4. They wanted Him to do miracles in public.

- What was their attitude to Jesus?

Unbelief, they had grown up with Him.

- What contradictory views were taken of Jesus in verse 12?

Then as now people responded to Him in different ways. Ask the group how they respond.

- What surprised the people about Him?

See verse 15. How can He know so much without studying?

- How can one know whether Christ's teaching is true or not?

See verse 17. Take Him at His word. If you follow Him then you will know.

Rhetorical question for the group . . .

"If God reveals Himself and His truth to you will you obey Him?"

2. John 7:25-36

Read through these verses.

- What hindered the people's belief in Jesus in verse 27?

See John 6:42.

- Despite this many did believe, why?

See verse 31. On the basis of the signs He did.

In verses 33 and 34, Jesus made one of His enigmatic statements. Read these two verses.

- Where did He plan to go that the Jews could not come?

- Do you think Jesus knew He would die and rise again from the dead and that He was going back to the Father, to heaven?

- If Jesus knew His own future what are the implications for our understanding of who He is?

Try and focus on the idea that if this is true then Jesus must be God.

3. John 7:37-52

In verses 37 to 52 the controversy continues. Some say, "He is the Christ," others not.

- Where did the people say the Christ was to come from?

See Matthew 2:1, 23. Jesus was born in Bethlehem but known widely as a Nazarene. It would be worth turning up these verses and have the group look at them.

- What did the officers say about Him in verse 46?

Jesus spoke with undeniable authority.

- On what basis did the authorities reject Christ?

Verse 52. The authorities appear to be unaware of His real birthplace. They judged on the basis of the Law as they understood it. their understanding was in error just as they didn't even bother to find out where Jesus was born.

- Have you come to a conclusion about who Jesus is ? Are there questions about Him you would like to raise?

If there is no response leave the thought with the group. A brief silence will let the challenge sink in.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter eight before the next meeting.

Study 8

John 8

Discussion Questions

1. John 8:1-11

Read through these verses.

- Why did the Pharisees take this woman to Jesus?

It was another effort to trap Jesus. See Leviticus 20:10.

- As you consider Christ's attitude to this woman, do you think that Jesus approved of what she had done? If not why did He not condemn her?

See John 3:16-17. Jesus loved the woman, yet condemned the sin.

- What lesson do you think Jesus was trying to get across to the Pharisees?

That they, the judges, were also sinners.

2. John 8:12-30

In previous chapters Jesus used two essentials of life, water and food to illustrate spiritual truth. Here in this passage, He uses another illustration, light.

Read through these verses.

- What did Jesus mean when He said that He was the Light of the World?

Truth is absolute. Jesus reveals truth.

- What was to be the result of Jesus being lifted up?

Verses 28. Christ's crucifixion and resurrection would confirm His authority. See Acts 17:30.

3. John 8:31-59

Jesus continues His discussion with the Jews. They didn't understand what Christ was saying to them for their expectation was for a King, a Messiah who would set the country free.

Read through these verses.

- In what way do you think the Jews upbringing and teaching hindered them from really understanding Jesus?

Their understanding of Scripture was very superficial. They had a legalistic approach.

- What hinders understanding today?

In some cases the same thing both for Christians and unbelievers. Many are religious.

- In verse 58 we find the phrase "Before Abraham was, I am." What did Jesus mean?

- What are the implications of your answer?

If Jesus has lived for ever, He is God. The group has only two choices, either Jesus is God or these verses are a lie. Which do they choose? If Jesus is God what are they going to do about Him? Don't force the issue but help the group to the logic of it all.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter nine before the next meeting.

Study 9

John 9

Try not to get bogged down at the start of this chapter with questions about suffering. The focus should be on Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. John 9:1-34

Read through this whole section to get the gist of the story.

- What did the disciples think caused the man's blindness?
Sin, verse 2.
- What explanations did Jesus give?
This man's blindness was for another reason.
- What did Jesus do about this man's need?
Example again of Christ's power to heal.
- What was the reaction of the neighbours and Pharisees?
Divided reaction yet again. Some for, some against.
- Why do you think, did this man have to tell his story over and over again?
Men tried to disprove the truth.
- Why did all their arguments fail to shake his story?
He spoke from personal experience, i.e. a personal experience with Christ.
- What issue was raised in verses 16 and 17? What is your opinion about Jesus?
Christ's identity.
- What were the main arguments the blind man put forward in verses 31-34?
God only listens to those who worship Him so if Jesus were not from God He could not do anything.

2. John 9:35-41

Read through these verses.

- What happened between the blind man and Jesus?
He believed in Jesus.
- Why do you think he believed when so many others did not?
Try and apply the question to the group.
- How do we become Christians?

Revise the Bridge Illustration, if you think it appropriate. "I hope some day you will walk across this bridge, if you haven't already done so."

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions. Encourage the group to read John chapter ten before the next meeting.

Study 10

John 10

Discussion Questions

1. John 10:1-18

Read the passage through.

- What does Jesus mean when He says He is the door?

Only through believing in Jesus is there salvation.

- Who are represented by the sheep?

Believers

- What is the main point of the parable?

Only Christ can save.

- Four times in verses 11-18 reference is made to the Good Shepherd (Jesus) laying down His life for the sheep. What is meant do you think?

Draw out again Christ's death for the forgiveness of sin.

Don't be unduly concerned if the understanding of the group is incomplete. Remember it is a process of gradual learning. The disciples didn't understand what Jesus meant either, until later.

- How has this passage added to your understanding of Jesus and who He is?

You should see in the discussion evidence of changed attitudes.

2. John 10:19-42

Read the passage through.

The main issue in this passage is the identity of Jesus. Why, do you think, is this question significant?

Emphasis - the fact that if Jesus is God then we need to act on what He has said.

- In verse 26 Jesus says, "You do not believe because you do not belong to My sheep." What does this mean? Are there some who cannot come to Jesus?

See also John 6:37. Focus on man's responsibility to consider the message and to respond to Christ. Every man is free to follow Christ or reject Him. God is Sovereign, but that is not the issue when evangelising. Try and avoid 'predestination' as such.

- What does Christ offer to those who make the commitment to follow Him?

See verses 27, 28.

Concluding low key comment . . .

"I wonder have you arrived at a conclusion about the question raised by the Jews, 'Are You the Christ?' Will you walk across the bridge someday or will you be like those who rejected Him?"

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter eleven before the next meeting.

Study 11

John 11

Most of this chapter centres on the story of Lazarus and how Jesus raised him from the dead. The story is taken section by section as otherwise the reading would be too long.

Discussion Questions

1. John 11:1-16

Read the first 16 verses through.

- Why did Jesus delay this visit to Lazarus when He heard he was ill?

Verses 6, 15. Help the group to see that Jesus knew what He would do.

- How do you relate this action to His love? Jesus seems to have heard about the illness through natural means - the two sisters - yet we are not told how He knew the purpose behind it, nor how He knew he was dead.

Jesus looked past short term pain to ultimate good. When you look at the reverse side or a tapestry all you see is disorder and cut threads, but look at the good side and one sees the beauty. We only see part of the picture, God see all of it.

- What lesson, do you think, was Jesus trying to teach in verses 9 and 10.

Men need to understand spiritual truth and act on it.

2. John 11:17-44

Read the passage through.

- What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am the resurrection and the life?"

Verse 25. He is the source of life after death and also spiritual life.

- What do you think we need to do if we are never to die?

Verse 25. Believe in Christ.

- The word 'believe' occurs often in these verses, what does it mean to believe in Jesus?

Not just mental assent to a truth but belief involves acting on knowledge.

- What did Jesus do for the dead Lazarus? What in this account makes it believable or otherwise for you?

Encourage discussion about this event and about the elements in the story which help you believe.

3. John 11:45-57

Read the passage through.

- What reaction was there to the miracle?

Verses 47, 48. They looked for ways to destroy Jesus.

- Why did some not believe? Were they not justified?

Presumably the threat to their personal position. to admit the miracle would mean following Jesus.

- Do these sorts of reasons stop people believing today?

Allow the group to discuss why people do refuse to follow Christ today and the variety of their arguments. Ultimately eternal life is worth any cost.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter twelve before the next meeting.

Study 12

John 12

Discussion Questions

1. John 12:1-11

Mary anoints the feet of Jesus.

- Why did Mary anoint Christ's feet?

It was her way of expressing what she felt about Jesus.

- Why do you think did Jesus allow Judas, who was a thief, to look after the money?

Jesus loved even Judas. He gave him every chance.

Low key comment . . .

Opportunities sometimes come to an end. See Hebrews 12:17.

- Why did the crowd come to see Jesus?

Verse 9. curiosity about Jesus and Lazarus.

- Why did the chief priests want to kill Lazarus?

Verses 9-11. As a result of his resurrection many believed in Jesus.

2. John 12:12-36

Read the passage through.

- What led the crowd to give this demonstration?

This was a crisis point for the Jews. They could not sit on the fence. They had to either reject Christ or follow Him.

- What was Christ's purpose in coming?

Verse 32. ". . . and I when I am lifted up (crucified) from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." Draw out of the group the thought that Jesus came so that men might become believers.

- In His illustration about the grain of wheat what was Jesus teaching?

Through His death (that of one man) many would be saved.

For those who walk with the Lord this is also a principle of self sacrifice in which the death of one's own hopes and expectations result in rich blessing for others.

3. John 12:37-50

Read the passage through.

- Many in authority turned to Christ - why did they not confess it?

This question leads into the next but one.

- Do people today still love the praise of men more than God?

- Why are we so concerned about the views of others?

- In what way does the opinion of others stop some coming to Christ today?

Pride? Fear of ridicule? Fear of losing friends?

- Who will be the final judge?

The truth we have heard and rejected will be pointed out, at the judgement, to those who reject Christ.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter thirteen before the next meeting.

Study 13

John 13

Discussion Questions

1. John 13: 1-20

Read the passage through.

- As the Passover approached Jesus was aware of a number of things. What were they?
His hour had come. His Father had given all things into His hands. He had come from God. He was going back to God.
- Why did Peter not want Jesus to wash his feet?
Because he was brought up to the idea that a 'Master' didn't do menial tasks for His followers.
- What was Jesus trying to teach His disciples by washing their feet?
Humility, service to others, lead by example.
Christ turns social and cultural norms upside-down. He set an example of service and humility.
- In verse 13 Jesus says He is 'Teacher and Lord.' What does it mean that Jesus was Teacher? What does it mean that Jesus was Lord?
A teacher shares ideas, information, trains others. 'Lord' implies obedience and submission to someone.

2. John 13:21-38

Read the passage through.

- Judas betrayed Jesus. Do you think he was a real disciple? Why or why not?
Judas had no real change of heart. Remember, personal responsibility for every thought, word and deed.
- What command did Jesus give His disciples in verses 34-35?
- How can we fulfil this command?
- Peter promised to die for Christ. Was he sincere? Why do you think he failed?
He meant it at the time. All of us are good at making boasts and human in our failure to keep what we promised.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter fourteen before the next meeting.

Study 14

John 14

Discussion Questions

1. John 14:1-11

Read the passage through.

- What is Jesus going to prepare?

The unseen, spiritual world is eternal. See 2 Corinthians 4:18.

- For whom is this promise?

Emphasise that these promises are for those who believe.

- What do you think Jesus means by 'the way' in verse 6?

That He is the route, the key the means of access to God.

- What are the implications for us that no one come to the Father except through Jesus?

We are saved through faith, not by works. See Ephesians 2:8-9.

- What basic truth has Philip not grasped in verses 8-11?

That Jesus had come to make the Father known to men. That He and the Father were one.

2. John 14:12-17

Read the passage through.

- What is available to the believer in verse 13?

The opportunity to change things through prayer.

- Who is the other Counsellor to whom Jesus refers?

The Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead.

- What promise is made to those who, out of love, obey Christ?

Verses 15-17. That God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit will dwell in them.

3. John 14:18-31

Read the passage through.

- What is the connection between 'love' and 'obedience' in verses 15, 21 and 23?

The outworking of love is doing that which pleases God.

- In verse 26 what did Jesus promise the Holy Spirit would do for the disciples?

It was vital that the disciples remembered what He had taught them in order to preach the Gospel when He died.

- How is this significant of us?

The record left for us was inspired by God and reliable.

- What is peace?

Try the Dictionary if all else fails. An inner assurance that whatever is happening around us God is in control.

- What is the difference between Christ's peace and the world's peace?

Christ's peace is based on who He is.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions. Encourage the group to read John chapter fifteen before the next meeting.

Study 15

John 15

Discussion Questions

1. John 15:1-11

Read the passage through.

- What principle is Jesus teaching in this parable about the True Vine?

He is the source of spiritual life.

- What is the fruit spoken of in verse 2?

Spiritual growth, primarily and to see others led to Christ.

- What do you think it means to 'abide' in Christ?

To make Him central in our lives, to grow more like Him, to have continuous unbroken fellowship with Christ.

- How is a branch associated with the vine? What lesson can we learn from this illustration?

The branch is connected and draws all its strength from the vine. So do we from Christ.

- What are the conditions for answered prayer?

Continual fellowship and obedience to the Word are again emphasised.

- Is this a blank cheque?

No, conditions are attached. See John 16 and 1 John 5:14-15.

Note

We are more than halfway through the study. It is likely that most intellectual questions have been answered. The real issue facing any who have not yet come is one of decision. Will they follow Christ?

Mention this in a low key way and if it is appropriate review the Bridge Illustration.

Don't pin anyone to the wall. Remember you are in the middle of a process. Let the Bible and Holy Spirit do their work. Keep dropping the idea into their minds that, "Someday I hope you will cross the bridge." You are making a point without forcing them to commit themselves if they are not ready.

2. John 15:12-17

Read the passage through.

- What does Jesus command us to do? How can we love others?

Love is not a feeling but, is Biblically acting in a loving way to others.

- What does verse 15 indicate about the relationship between Jesus, His disciples and the Father?

- What does it mean to ask in Jesus' Name?

On His behalf, as His representative, on the basis of what He has done on the cross.

Summary

Discoveries in John's Gospel

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter sixteen before the next meeting.

Study 16

John 16

Discussion Questions

1. John 16:1-11

Read the passage through.

- In the last chapter we say the extent of the world's hatred of Christ. Now Jesus tells the disciples He is leaving them. Where did He say He was going?

He came from the Father, He was returning to the Father. Try not to get involved in deep discussions about the Trinity.

- How did the disciples react?

Verse 6.

- Jesus told the disciples they would be better off when He had gone. How could this be true?
- Verse 7. The Holy Spirit would come if He, Jesus, went away. What three things does the Holy Spirit communicate to the world?

The Holy Spirit brings an awareness of sin to men and women. He assures them of a judgement to come.

- How does one know or sense that the Holy Spirit is trying to communicate with us?

After discussion share how He spoke or speaks to you. How are you aware of Him speaking to you?

2. John 16:12-15

Read the passage through.

- What was the Holy Spirit to do for the disciples?

Verse 13.

- What was the Holy Spirit to do about Christ Himself?

Verse 14. The Holy Spirit's function throughout the New Testament is to glorify Christ rather than Himself.

3. John 16:16-24

Read the passage through.

- Jesus foresaw a great trial ahead for the disciples. How could He speak with such authority?

Help the group to react to the inevitable conclusion that He is God.

Comment to the group. (Gently)

In verse 22 Jesus promised the disciples that He would see them again. Will you ever see Him?

- In verse 23 Jesus says, "If you ask anything . . ." Who does the 'you' apply to? Is there a limit, if so, what?

In His will, for His purposes. God's will and purposes are revealed in Scripture. In this context His resources are unlimited.

3. John 16:25-33

Read the passage through.

- In verse 28 Jesus made a declaration about His past and His future. At this point in our study who do you think that Jesus is?

Encourage the group to realise that Christ really is God. If any still doubt make sure they understand what this passage actually says.

- Jesus asked the disciples, "Do you now believe?" What does it mean to believe in Him? Do you believe in Him?

Repeated discussion of previous topics allow for those who are slower to come to an understanding for themselves.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter seventeen before the next meeting.

Study 17

John 17

This chapter is in fact a very special prayer by Jesus to the Father.

Discussion Questions

1. John 17:1-5

Read the passage through.

- What do you understand by the words 'eternal life?'

To know God through a personal relationship not just to know about Him.

- When and how can one get 'eternal life?'

Do all in the group understand what they have to do to have eternal life? 'Believe,' in John 3:18; 5:24

Note

The word 'repent' does not occur in John's Gospel.

2. John 17:6-19

Read the passage through.

- What did Jesus teach the disciples in verses 6-8?
- Summarise what we have learned about God and Jesus over the weeks?

Try and steer the group to discuss who Jesus is and what He wants us to do.

- What input did Christ have in the lives of the disciples?

He prayed with them. He was with them. He kept them. He guarded them. He gave them God's Word. He sent them into the world.

3. John 17:20-26

Read the passage through.

- What did Jesus pray, first of all, for us?

The union Christ prayed for is that of the believer with Christ and the Father.

- What else did Jesus ask for us?

To be with Him, to see His glory.

To glorify means to reveal the real character of something or someone, in this case Jesus Christ.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter eighteen before the next meeting.

Study 18

John 18

Israel was under Roman rule and the Jewish authorities acted under sufferance. The High Priest was a political figure who didn't want the wrath of the Romans to be aroused.

Discussion Questions

1. John 18:1-11

Read the passage through.

- What would the consequences have been of a national uprising to follow Jesus?

See Luke 24:21.

- Consider verse 11. Was Jesus an unwilling victim?

His purpose was to die on the cross so that sin could be forgiven and to leave a team behind to pass on the message of salvation. See John 17.

2. John 18:12-27

Read these verses through and also Matthew 26:57-66.

Trial for life was illegal at night. It was illegal for the guards to carry out the arrest, it should have been the witnesses. The witnesses could not agree so Christ should have been freed and the false witnesses tried. It was illegal for the judge to question the witness.

- Without Christ's answer in Matthew 25:64 Could Jesus have been condemned?

The Greek word translated 'adjure' placed Christ under an obligation to answer.

3. John 18:28-40

Read the passage through.

- When Jesus was brought before Pilate what charge did the Jews make?

What verdict did Pilate bring in verse 38?

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter nineteen before the next meeting.

Study 19

John 19

The last study looked at the trial and how the Jews broke their own laws to convict Jesus of some crime, any crime, which would allow them to seek His death at the hands of the Romans.

Discussion Questions

1. John 19:1-16

- In chapter 18 Pilate found Jesus not guilty. Why did he then condemn Him?

We all make decisions for personal reasons at times.

- What was the origin of Pilate's power over Jesus?

*Pilate was allowed power over Jesus by God to achieve His purposes.
Jesus was a willing sacrifice.*

- What swung the balance against Jesus in Pilate's mind?

Again, personal interest. Pilate's mentor in Rome, Sejanus had died and it is likely that Pilate was already in trouble with the Emperor Tiberius and could not afford further trouble with Caesar.

- Pilate chose his political career rather than stand up for his convictions. In what ways do we give up 'convictions' for personal interest?

Rejecting Christ, not acknowledging Him in public, blending into the non Christian world.

Comment: (Gently) What are you going to do about Christ?

2. John 19:17-30

Read the passage through.

- Even in the agony of the cross Jesus remembered His mother. How does His example speak to us?

Is our primary concern not usually for ourselves? Jesus always thought of others first.

- Jesus said, "It is finished." "What did He mean?"

His work on the cross for the forgiveness of sin. See John 3:16

3. John 19:31-42

Read the passage through.

- Why did the soldiers thrust the spear into Christ's body?

What is the significance of the Phrase 'blood and water' in verse 34?

Note

After death the solid content of blood separates out to leave a clear liquid containing sediment. The pericardium is a sac surrounding the heart normally containing a clear liquid not unlike water. Under stress the quantity of this liquid increases and this may have contributed to the volume of clear liquid. In any event the spear would have pierced upwards under the rib cage into the rib chest cavity. Jesus was dead.

Summary

Discoveries in John's Gospel

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter twenty before the next meeting.

Study 20

John 20

Discussion Questions

1. John 20:1-19

Read the passage through.

- What had happened at the tomb to cause the women to wonder?

The stone was moved. See Matthew 28:6. The body was gone.

- What did John see when he went into the tomb to cause him to believe?

The bandages which were wrapped around Jesus were intact - but empty. Christ had 'passed through them.'

2. John 20:10-18

Read the passage through.

- Did Mary really see two angels?
- To where did Jesus tell Mary He was going?
- Do you think the disciples found it hard to believe in the resurrection?

The whole thing was a shock to the disciples. They had hoped that Jesus would free the nation. Then, in a matter of hours He was dead. Things were happening too fast for them to keep up with.

- Do you believe that Jesus rose again? If so, what convinces you?

What convinces you the leader? The resurrection is vital. If no resurrection the whole Christian message is in vain. See 1 Corinthians 15. Don't force belief, allow them time to understand that the Bible says He rose again. It, the Bible will do its own work.

- But if He rose from the dead then all must take what He said very seriously.

3. John 20:18-31

Discussion Questions

- Jesus appeared to the disciples who were in a closed room with the doors shut. What do you make of this?

Christ was no longer limited by physical barriers. As He "passed through" the grave clothes so He passed through solid walls. His resurrection body was different.

- What made the doubting Thomas believe?

His own physical senses.

- What reason does John give in verse 31 for writing this record? Do you believe in Christ?

Allow the group time to relate to, react to this question, inwardly if not outwardly.

- What conclusion have you come to about Christ and who He is?

Note

Consider reviewing the Bridge Illustration and asking the group if they have crossed the Bridge yet.

Suggest that anyone who wants to talk privately about the issues gives you a phone call.

Summary

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Encourage the group to read John chapter twenty one before the next meeting.

Study 21

John 21

Discussion Questions

1. John 21:1-14

Read the passage through.

- Why do you think did Jesus reveal Himself on so many occasions? See Acts 1-3.

The disciples had been His focus for three years and more. They had to carry the message to the world. It was vital that they were equipped to do so.

- It must have been a strange breakfast. How, do you think, did the disciples feel? Can you relate to this yourself?

See Mark 14:28; Mark 16:7; Matthew 26:32; Matthew 28:7; Matthew 28:16. The disciples should not have been fishing, they should have been on the agreed mountain. Why did they not go there?

- Are we losing out because of unbelief?

2. John 21:15-25

Read the passage through.

Note Christ's concern for Peter after his denial of Him a few days earlier.

- What do you think was Jesus trying to achieve?

Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside down, in later life.

Summary of the Study

- What have you learned about Jesus over the last few months?
- Who do you think He is?

He is God. Do all now believe this? Guide discussion in this direction.

- What do you think is He asking you to do today?

Ask someone to summarise the discussions.

Glossary

AUTHORITY: This is the right and power to enforce obedience.

BELIEVE: To believe means not only to accept a truth or doctrine mentally but to act on that truth or doctrine. In Biblical terms believing is primarily applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. It means not only to know that Jesus Christ died in order that our sins might be forgiven, but that we act on that knowledge and claim the forgiveness offered to us.

BLASPHEMY: To blaspheme is to slander or speak lightly of the sacred or God. It is to act or speak of God in such a way as to show contempt.

BLESSING: This is a general term referring to very many good and beneficial things which happen to us as a result of our relationship with God. It includes, from time to time, such things as salvation, peace, fellowship, spiritual abilities, material needs, encouragement, help and much more.

CHRIST: The name Christ is a title, like King, given to the Lord Jesus. It means literally the Anointed One.

COVENANT: A covenant is a binding agreement between two people. When God makes a covenant this means that God will act as He has promised as and when men meet the conditions relating to the covenant.

FAITH: This is trust in a person. It focuses on the character, holiness and power of God. In practical terms this faith - in God Himself - and who He is - is seen in our obedience to His Word in all circumstances, even when we do not understand why.

FORGIVENESS: This is that which allows the fellowship between two people (one of whom has sinned against, or offended the other) to be restored. One of the 'people' may be God Himself. When someone 'forgives' another, the offence is buried, never to be raised again. Three promises are implied when we forgive . . .

1. That the forgiver will never think about (mull over) the offence again.
2. That the forgiver will never raise the offence again with the offender.
3. That the forgiver will never discuss the offence with a third party.

GOSPEL: The word gospel means literally the 'good news.' It is used in the Bible especially of the teaching relating to what God has done about sin through Christ and how men may be forgiven and reconciled to God.

LOVE: Two Greek words are translated 'love' in the New Testament. 'Phileo' and 'Agape.' Phileo relates to relationships on human level and might be translated fondness. Agape relates to God's love for us and is an emotion beyond human capacity.

However, when the Bible commands us to 'love one another' it is not speaking of feelings but of actions. To love another means to act in a loving way towards them. See 1 Corinthians 13. Thus we can act in a loving way towards someone we do not like. God does not command us to like everybody but to love them.

PASSOVER: In the book of Exodus, chapter 12, we read how God brought His people out of Egypt. Just prior to this event He killed every first-born in Egypt, both people and animals. God's people had been warned to sprinkle blood from a lamb on the lintel and door posts of their houses so that God seeing the blood would 'Passover' and their first-born would be safe.

Discoveries in John's Gospel

PRAISE: To praise God is to commend Him in words or song for Himself, for His qualities and for what He has done. It means to speak well of Him.

REPENT: To repent means to change direction. In Biblical terms, to stop controlling our own lives and to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in obedience to the scriptures.

WITNESS: To witness means to tell others by word and example about the "Gospel."