

Leader's Guide

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Thanks for leading your group!

Thank you for leading your small group in this Bible study. We pray you have a fantastic experience as you look for the “Bible inside your Bible” inside the pages of John’s Gospel.

If you were in a seminary class, this venture would likely be titled “Finding the Old Testament inside the New Testament.” What you would find in that class is also what you’ll discover in this shorter, less intensive class.

The New Testament is saturated with references to the Old Testament!

Picture a sponge soaked with water. When it’s heavy with water, can you distinguish what part of the object in your hand is water, and what part is sponge? Yes, there are two different elements. But a soaked sponge is also a single element. That’s a great illustration for your New Testament. And it’s a great opening illustration for your first group session if you’re leading a small group. **Why not have a bucket of water and a waterlogged sponge to illustrate the point?**

This leader’s guide is designed for use after each week’s lessons.

The Bible study is designed for students to do one lesson a day, five days a week. Clearly, some students can and will do more than one lesson per day. Others will miss some of the lessons. A few will try to do the study by only attending the weekly review sessions. As always, what people invest in a study like this is directly related to the benefit they receive from it. Encourage people to do the daily lessons. If you spot someone with a workbook that’s been “worked over,” hold it up as an example of good work. Ask the person what they’ve gotten out of the lessons already.

As the leader of your group, you know best how to motivate, direct and guide your group. We’ll suggest some activities and open-ended discussion questions for each week. However, we’re trusting you to take our ideas and suggestions and to make them better. Pick and choose what will work best for you. If you come up with a good idea, be ready to share it with others!

Join our Facebook Group Page: You may have ideas you want to share with other small-group leaders. Use this QR code or [click here](#) to join our Facebook page and help us make this Bible study the best it can be!



Week One

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Week One Review

Getting your group off to a good start is critically important. If you've just formed the group, some brief introductions would be very helpful. Even if you're an established group, ask this question of everyone to respond to one of these questions as an **"icebreaker"** exercise:

What interested you in this study?

Have you ever thought of Jesus and the disciples reading a "Bible" before?

What are you hoping to gain by being a part of this study?

Have you read the entire Old Testament?

The Main Point: Jesus, his disciples, his critics, the legal experts, his mother, Mary Magdalene and nearly every Jewish person who listened to his sermons were all saturated with passages and ideas taken from the Old Testament. They were so familiar with the passages, they instantly heard when Jesus was quoting a phrase from a prophet, a law from Moses or an event that took place in the life of David. The Jewish people around Jesus weren't just "familiar" with the Old Testament. They'd memorized huge sections of the Text!

Memory Verse: This would be a good time to call on someone to quote this week's memory verse. Don't skip this! Understanding how difficult it is for our culture to memorize anything is a great way to illustrate how different our culture is from the culture Jesus knew. It's OK to arrange for a volunteer in advance for this task. Do whatever it takes to get off to a good start with this practice. You might even want to do a group memory exercise. Quote a phrase from the passage yourself, and have them repeat it after you. Do this as many times as needed until everyone can successfully quote the verse.

Watch the video. Prepare in advance to show the "Week One Video."



[Click here](https://www.experienceisraelnow.com/john) or visit [experienceisraelnow.com/john](https://www.experienceisraelnow.com/john).

Lead a review of this week's lessons.

There's no need to cover all five lessons on any given week. You're the leader. Which lesson(s) seem most important to you? Which ones might have the most impact on your group at the particular time you're going through the workbook?

We'll offer some thoughts and suggestions for each day's lessons. It's up to you what to use or what to skip. If you come upon a good idea that's not listed here, be sure to share it on our Facebook group page. Let others benefit from what you're discovering as a leader!

Day 1: Genesis

How many years elapsed between the time John was following Jesus and the day he wrote the first words of John's Gospel? Get the group to work through this answer.

Year Zero: There is no such thing, but centuries after Jesus lived, the Roman calendar was "reset" to mark the birth of Jesus as the most monumental event in all of history. Scholars today think this "zero-date" is off by one, two or even three years.

30 AD: Jesus is crucified, laid in a borrowed tomb, and resurrected. Jesus is about 33. John's age is unknown, though he appears to be the youngest of the disciples. Imagine 16 or 17, and you'll be close to the right age.

67 AD: Paul is executed by Nero, meaning all of Paul's letters were written before that date.

70 AD Jerusalem is destroyed by the Romans and burned to the ground. None of the writings in the New Testament refer to this traumatic event, despite the fact Jesus foretold the city's destruction. It's possible that all of the Gospels and all of the letters in the New Testament were written before that date. Revelation might have been written far enough after the date to not mention it specifically.

The Gospels that go by the names Mark, Matthew and Luke were apparently written before John. The earliest copies of Mark's Gospel were circulating well before AD 70. Luke was a companion of Paul. They traveled together for many years before and during Paul's imprisonments. The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts would have been composed during those years. Matthew's Gospel also appears in that time period.

If John wrote his Gospel between 65 and 70, he would have been around 55 years old.

The main point/question: What was John doing between the days when he followed Jesus and the days when he started writing the Gospel of John?

One of the things he did was to continue studying Scripture. This was a pattern of everyone else in the New Testament (NT). Examples would be Paul's pattern of preaching in the Synagogue from Scripture (Acts 17:2), and a man named Apollos in Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28). Peter's sermons in Acts are also littered with OT references. There's no doubt John kept studying the Scripture that was the foundational document for his faith!

If you were to write the story of Jesus, you'd choose your words carefully. John chose his words carefully, too!

Ask for answers: Did John intentionally echo Genesis 1:1 in the opening sentence of his Gospel? If so, why would he have the nerve to do that? What had he seen to give the story of Jesus such a lofty beginning?

Day 2: Light

Why is light such a good illustration for Jesus? Can you see "light" ... or see without it? Light is visible and invisible at the same time. Does this explain why so many people seem blind to who Jesus is?

Day 3: Tabernacle

If you've done a study on the Tabernacle, you'll be ahead of the game in leading others to understand how this portable, sacred tent traveled with God's people after they left Egypt and headed for the Promised Land.

If someone else in your group is familiar with the Tabernacle, its furniture or the role it played in teaching people how to be God's people, enlist them in advance to do a short description.

But the main point to emphasize is that through the Tabernacle, God "lived" among his people. This is the very point John was making in this week's memory verse! (Get someone to give it another try!)

By the way, the Feast of Tabernacles is in the Fall. There is some speculation that the birth of Jesus may have fallen during that feast or very close to it. If so, it would have been one more reason for John to have used "Tabernacle" language.

Day 4: Grace

You may want to devote some time to the "grace-and-truth" element of this lesson. Is it "grace" when God gives a "law" we might want to ignore? Does God know best for us, the way a parent knows how to keep a child away from electrical outlets?

The best opportunity of the week to get your group talking may come from the exercise in this lesson (pages 18-19). Why do life's most important lessons have to be so difficult? Elicit comments or stories. A person may have written down her thoughts. Maybe she can read them for the group. Another person may have not written anything at all, and yet have something important to share.

Listen for biblical truths and tie each story back to Scripture.

Day 5: Highway

There's much to cover in this lesson that will surface in the weeks ahead. Things you might want to highlight:

There was a group of radical Scripture readers living in the desert, simply because Isaiah had indicated that's where the Messiah would first surface!

"Messiah-fever" had gripped all of Israel while John was preaching. People were actively looking for either "The Prophet" Moses had promised or the rise of an Elijah-like prophet.

John the Baptizer and the religious leaders who confronted him all knew the OT well enough to speak to one another with verses they had memorized.

Summary: We're just getting started in this study. The first few weeks will provide a foundation for all that is to follow. By the end of the 10-week period, there will be a rich understanding of how much "Bible" is hiding inside the pages of your Bible! If participants will memorize the verses and do the exercises, this Bible study could soon become a pivotal, life-changing tool.

Week Two

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Week Two Review

Anyone who shows up in your group having done ten lessons is probably going to be with you until the end of this study. Thank them profusely for making the commitment!

Memory verse: Get a volunteer to quote this week's memory verse. If necessary, do another group exercise so that everyone is engaged in the process. The key phrase in this week's memory verse is "come and see."

Icebreaker: Get some people in your group to share some "place-and-story" connections from their own lives. Everyone has plenty of them! From memorable moments on a school campus to a place where a couple got married to where a soldier engaged in battle, many *places* in our lives are forever connected to the *stories* of our lives.

Tie all of those stories into the clear evidence that John had his own "place-and-story" talking points in the Gospel of John. There's no better example of that than the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan River.

Watch the video. Prepare in advance to show the "Week Two Video." This short (6:38) video has incredible drone footage of the Jordan River, the Judean Wilderness and much more.



[Click here](#) or visit experienceisraelnow.com/john.

Lead a review of this week's lessons.

Remember: It's up to you which days/lessons get more prominence than others. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to key points that need to be covered. Listen to comments from your group about life situations they're facing. Even events in your community and culture could give you clues as how to best use these biblical lessons for your group.

Day 1: Jordan

Read all or part of Joshua 3 and 2 Kings 2 to make sure your group sees what had previously happened at this general area of the Jordan River Valley.

Help your group understand that when John walked with his family on their annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the adults in his group would have been telling these stories. John would have naturally connected stories from the past with anything Jesus chose to do at this location.

Can you provide an example from your own life of place-and-story connections? Have you visited a 9/11

memorial, a historic battlefield, or toured a famous sports stadium? If so, you instantly remembered events from the past. What if a politician chose to make a key announcement at such a location? What message would he or she be trying to communicate with a modern-day place-and-story connection?

Is it logical to think that Jesus was doing the same thing? Review the material on page 27, making sure your group members nail down the place-and-story impact of this event. The concept will continue to be important in lessons yet to come!

Take the time to hear at least one baptism story. If your group includes people who've not been baptized as followers of Jesus, these stories can be extremely influential to someone considering baptism. Celebrate each story you hear!

Day 2: Disciple

Go to the exercise on page 29. Make sure your group comprehends that it was common practice throughout the Old Testament for a key spiritual leader to have disciples.

Life-changing opportunity: Are you raising up "disciples?" Leading a small group mimics some of the same things Jesus would have done with his disciples. And ... do you remember his last words of instruction? We are to make *disciples* ...

Perhaps you could engage your group in a discussion about how to make disciples. Parents can disciple young children. Grandparents can do the same with grandchildren. Perhaps a co-worker spots an opportunity to engage a friend in a one-on-one Bible study like this one. Churches offer weekly services, occasional retreats and Bible conferences. Treat them as if you were the disciple listening to a spiritual leader.

Day 3: Signs

Two things should stand out from this day's lesson. First, John's use of the word "signs" has a clear connection to the "signs" of Moses to Pharaoh. All of these miracles were an effort to point people in the right direction. Pharaoh, however, was a terrible sign reader! Second, John only included seven of these miraculous signs from Jesus in the Gospel of John.

Elicit responses from your group about both of these concepts. Was it a new thought? Is there more to be learned? Did they make any notes in the workbook they'd like to share with the group? Get people involved who've not been speaking up!

There's also the concept of asking God for a sign today. The key point? Those asking for signs in the Bible were willing to obey before the sign was delivered. It would be a very dangerous thing to ask for a sign from God and then refuse to obey!

If someone in the group is desperately looking for a sign from God about life direction, stop and pray for that person. If they've had enough courage to speak the struggle, you must have the courage to pray on the spot.

Day 4: Wedding

This is one of the more entertaining days of this entire Bible study. Among the things you could review:

Weddings in Jewish communities have their own traditions that are rich in biblical history. You might do the research on all of the symbolism, or assign that task to someone in your group. It's still common to see weddings taking place on Monday nights (the third day begins at sunset) in a Jewish community. Cover all of those details as found in pages 37-39.

Ritual washing is important in many parts of Jewish life, including at weddings. Jesus used the ritual washing water of the wedding at Cana to perform his first miraculous sign. Water used to *make people right with God* was going to save this wedding!

Elicit responses from your group about all the symbolism on display at this event, including, perhaps, the connection between wine at the wedding and the Passover wine of the Last Supper.

Finally, there's also the use of numbers in the Bible, and John's intentional inclusion of only six signs before the resurrection in his Gospel. Was he trying to communicate something in the way the signs seemed to build in intensity? Was Jesus the "seventh element" or was the resurrection of Jesus the unstoppable seventh "sign?"

As you look for symbolism in numbers, remember that John wanted everything to point to Jesus. Above all else, he might say, make sure they see Jesus.

Day 5: Temple

The key exercise of this day's lesson is found on page 42. Take your group to that page and go over each section of the diagrammed passage. This is, perhaps, one of the best aspects of this Bible study. You'll have multiple opportunities to circle, underline and highlight passages from John's Gospel and passages from the Old Testament, and to gain valuable insight into things that aren't immediately obvious to most Bible readers. Model going over this exercise, and challenge them to follow the instructions on the exercises yet to come.

Summary: When Jesus cleared the Temple, he was clearing out an area of worship reserved for Gentiles. Without debate, the Jewish leaders would not have allowed messy animals or noisy moneychangers in the sacred spaces reserved for Jewish worshipers.

What is the message for us in an era when cultures have erected barriers between racial, sexual, political and economic groups? Are you glad that Jesus did not limit the opportunity to worship to Jewish people? Is there a responsibility for us as his followers to tear down artificial walls in our own culture?

Week Three

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Week Three Review

This third week of lessons has some amazing new insights from some of the best known passages in John's Gospel. From the visit of Nicodemus in John 3 to the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6, you've got a lot to cover!

Memory verse: Get a volunteer to quote this week's memory verse. This may be the easiest memory verse of the entire Bible study. You're also close to the most famous verse in the Bible, so you might as well have someone quote John 3:16. In doing this, you're establishing a truth that most modern Bible readers are reluctant to believe: We *can* memorize Scripture!

Icebreaker: Ask your group if anyone takes a full 24 hours off to rest each week. You might be greeted with a laughter. However, you might have someone who's decided to celebrate Shabbat (Sabbath) each week. If so, get them to share what the experience is like. Others may have taken some targeted time for solitude, including times that include physical activity like hiking. Ask about the benefits of intentional rest. Likewise, ask about the consequences of ignoring this biblical command.

The point? Resting on Shabbat is one of the Ten Commandments. The culture Jesus knew was radically committed to keeping that commandment every week. As for Jesus, he clearly kept Shabbat *every week*, but he didn't like some of the rules that had developed around the weekly holiday.

Lead a review of this week's lessons.

Remember: It's up to you which of these lessons get more prominence than others. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to key points that need to be covered. If you want to skip an entire day, feel free. Don't let others depend on you to do these lessons for them. This is a *review* of what should have already been done.

Day 1: Spirit

The story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night is one of the best known stories in John's Gospel. The portrayal of Nicodemus in *The Chosen* series is excellent. If enough people in your group have seen the series, this may be a good springboard for your conversation of the material covered in this lesson.

You should point out that Nicodemus was both a Pharisee and a member of the powerful Sanhedrin. Since Jesus argued with so many Pharisees and other religious leaders, we often think of all Pharisees as enemies of Jesus. In reality, most were deeply committed to following God's Law. Some simply went too far with their legalism. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea both became followers of Jesus. Another Pharisee invited Jesus to his home for a big meal (Luke 7:36-50). The invitation itself was evidence that not all Pharisees were blinded by their "Pharisaical" objections to what Jesus said or did.

As for finding the Old Testament inside your New Testament, the “snake of Moses” mentioned in John 3:14 is a phenomenal example of the “Bible inside your Bible.” Once you read about the faith-based cure for snake bites in Numbers 21:4-9, Jesus’ statement about being “lifted up” makes much more sense. All who look to him in faith at that moment will be healed of much more than a painful snake bite!

Day 2: Bad Blood

Handle this section with care and sensitivity. If you need to address racial reconciliation or painful cases of discrimination, do so. But keep your group pointed toward the hope that is found in Jesus. After all, by the time Jesus and his disciples left Sychar, his disciples had forged lasting friendships that had seemed impossible only a few days before. They saw how Jesus brings people together, despite their differences.

Be sure your group sees the place-and-story connection between Sychar and the Old Testament. Abram had a history here, as did Jacob. Prophets like Elijah and Hosea had warned the leaders of the northern kingdom that God would hold them accountable in places like this valley. When the exile happened (2 Kings 15:29), the land was soaked with blood. The people of the northern kingdom never returned from their captivity. Instead, the land in the heart of Israel was populated with “Samaritans,” a people who did not follow Jewish religious beliefs or respect Jerusalem as the place where God was to be worshiped.

The disciples were naturally nervous about going through such a community. Imagine their shock when Jesus assigned them rooms in Samaritan homes that evening! Soon, they were laughing with new friends, playing with Samaritan children and enjoying Samaritan food. Jesus was changing his disciples as much as he was the people of Sychar! Could that happen in our culture, too?

Day 3: Thirsty

Watch the video. Prepare in advance to show the “Week Three Video.” This short (5:23) video has beautiful footage of Samaria, the northernmost areas of Israel and of the En Gedi oasis in the Judean Wilderness.

Be sure to point your group to the “living water” phrases from the writings of Jeremiah, Zechariah, Isaiah and Ezekiel, all found on page 54. The point? Jesus didn’t make up the phrase “living water.” While it might be an unusual phrase in your world, the disciples and the woman at the well knew exactly what Jesus was offering!



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Day 4: Work

The realization that the Pharisees had a legitimate concern about people keeping the Shabbat will be shocking to some in your group. Be sure to cover the information on page 59.

You could engage a lively discussion about Shabbat. Jesus clearly rested once a week and went to weekly synagogue services (Luke 4:16). But he also allowed his disciples to break the legalistic rules that had been added to the Fourth Commandment. He didn’t hesitate to heal people as a part of worship.

If we’re happy to not be so legalistic about our faith, do we need to look again at the need for weekly rest and corporate worship?

Another opportunity for discussion could come with the open-ended question found on page 60. Have we developed any new rules for our faith that Jesus might ignore?

Day 5: Prophet

Make sure your group sees the promise Moses made to his people that another prophet would one day be raised up to lead them (page 61). Under the leadership of Moses, the people were miraculously fed every day while they were in the wilderness.

When Jesus presented a miraculous meal for the huge crowd that followed him, it was only natural for many to remember the promise Moses had made. After all, they knew the Text!

Finally, there's yet another place-and-story connection in the Valley of Jezreel. Elijah and Elisha had based their ministries in small communities in this valley. Jesus did similar miracles in small communities in the same place! Put yourself in the sandals of people living in Shunem and Nain. Wouldn't the people who had deep family roots in that area still be telling the stories of the day Elisha had brought a woman's only son back to life? It was only natural that they would immediately call Jesus a prophet when he did the same thing!



Week Four

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Week Four Review

It's always about the Text. That's one of the fundamental lessons of this Bible study. Over and over, Jesus speaks of Scripture, quotes Scripture and asks people immersed in the Text if they've ever read Scripture! That's abundantly clear in this week's lessons. Keep this concept in focus all the way through this study and the final few lessons will be amazing.

Memory verse: This might be a good week for you to model your own efforts at memorizing Scripture. By all means, make sure your participants see that you're making the effort to memorize the words. And this week's passage is directly related to a very famous Old Testament story.

Icebreaker: In classrooms all over the world, Jewish rabbis give their students a taste of honey on the first day of class. Bring some honey to your group this week! Let your participants taste the first day's lesson, even as you begin it. An option to honey would be candy that carries the taste of honey. The point the rabbis are making? Studying God's Word is a sweet endeavor!

Lead a review of this week's lessons.

Day 1: Bread

While the taste of honey is still on the tongue, read the verses your group completed on page 68.

Have your group read and compare Isaiah 54 and Revelation 21. There are amazing similarities, and you'll be giving your group clear evidence that even the last book of the New Testament is saturated with verses from the Old Testament.

When you're done, point out that Jesus directly quoted the Isaiah 54 passage as he claimed to be the "bread of life." This was obviously a controversial claim. Ask your group how people in the crowd would have reacted to it. Some will observe that many listening to Jesus would have been scandalized. Others may bring up the fact that Jesus had already done so many miracles, many listening must have been convinced that Jesus was a man like no other man. Indeed, some left Jesus at this point in his ministry, while others followed closer than ever.

Days 2, 3 and 4

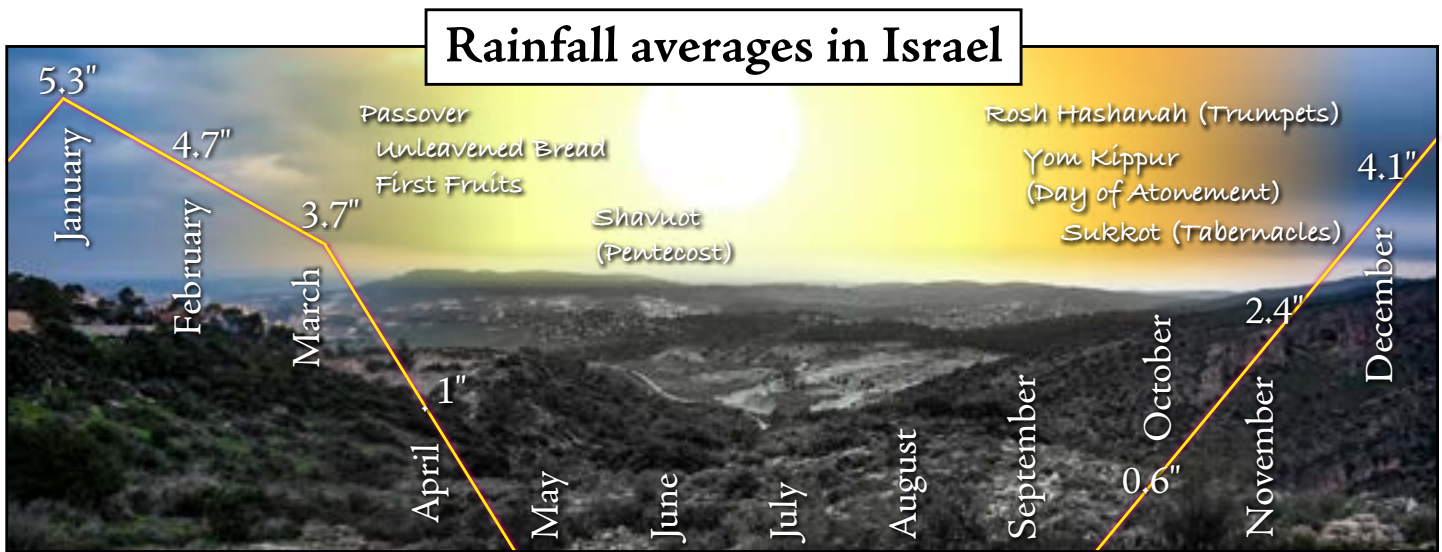
We spent three days on John 7, when Jesus went to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem and created quite the stir by the things he said and did.

If you're not familiar with the Feast of Tabernacles (also called "Booths" or "Sukkot"), do the research before you meet with your group. If you have someone in the group who is familiar with the biblical feasts, you may

want to assign this task to him or her. But be careful. It's very easy to spend far too much time trying to describe these feasts. Entire books have been written on them!

Use the illustration on page 73 to help your group understand that the Feast of Tabernacles falls at the conclusion of a very hot, dry summer. We've written the feasts in their approximate places on this chart, as your group was challenged to do. If you like, find this year's dates for each holiday and have them ready for your group. Be sure to only have the dates for these seven holidays. Many other holidays, like Hanukkah, were added centuries after God gave the instructions for these seven holy days.

Tabernacles is a bit like the American holiday of Thanksgiving, with eight days of feasting, celebration and a spirit of gratefulness for God's provision. There is also a great deal of prayer that God will send the much-needed rain in the next few months. That is one of the most important things you must communicate in this lesson.



Another thing that is vitally important to communicate is the water libation ceremony that happens during Tabernacles. The parade from the temple to the Pool of Siloam and back was full of ceremony and marked by much singing and cheering. In a direct affront to the corrupt priesthood, Jesus shouted, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me!" The passage is 7:37-38. The material is covered on page 78. The connection with the Old Testament is obvious. Many of the prophets had spoken of the "living water" that is found in a right relationship with God.

In the next week's lessons, you'll cover the healing of the blind man who had mud on his eyes. Jesus sent him to the same Pool of Siloam, apparently on the very next day after the high priest made his celebrated walk to the ritual washing pool. So help your group visualize the street, the pool and the Temple Mount now.

A special note about Day 4: It's not unusual to hear Bible-reading people say with frustration, "I wish Jesus had just plainly said who he was!"

Because Jesus didn't live in our culture, and because we don't live in the culture he knew, we usually miss some of the most obvious statements Jesus ever made about his divinity. As we "discover the Bible inside our Bibles," the exercise on page 76 could be a game-changer for someone in your group. The people listening to Jesus say these things certainly heard what he was saying!

Day 5: Dust

After the Feast of Tabernacles was over, Jesus was confronted with one of his most challenging tests. A woman caught in the act of adultery was brought before him. If Jesus offered her grace, he would have to ignore the Law. That would disqualify him as a legitimate Torah teacher. But if he upheld the Law, she would die! At the same time, his popular message of grace would take a real blow.

Watch the video. Prepare in advance to show the “Week Four Video.” This video (7:43) will cover this story, emphasizing the connection between what Jesus did and a well-known passage from Jeremiah 17. If your group doesn’t know Jeremiah 17, then that’s an example of how different our cultures are! You might want to ask if anyone in your group has ever memorized Jeremiah 17 ... or any passage from Jeremiah. Contrast what you hear with the fact that so many in the crowd that day knew exactly what Jesus was doing.



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Conclusion

Each week features a summary lesson we call “Selah.” This week’s Selah thought (pages 82-83) is a profound one. If the woman caught in adultery had been executed, it would have been at the same place where Jesus was crucified or very close to it. Jerusalem was a small city and everyone would have known the place where public executions were carried out. So there’s no doubt she knew where her captors had planned on taking her. To have seen the person who had saved her life dying there must have been an overwhelming sight.

Also, when Jesus died on the cross, he was doing something the legal experts thought was impossible. By dying in the woman’s place, Jesus was upholding the Law — which called for her death — while giving her amazing grace.

Perhaps you might want to have your group speculate on what she thought of Jesus being condemned to die. Was she in Jerusalem that day? Had she followed Jesus after he saved her life? And most importantly, did she take his words seriously to “Go, and sin no more?”



Week Five

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Week Five Review

The names of Abraham, Jacob (Israel) and Moses show up often in the New Testament. The more you know their stories, the more you'll understand many of the things Jesus said. This will be especially important as you consider all that happened as you review this week's lessons.

Memory verse: Have one or two volunteers quote this week's memory verse.

Icebreaker: Have a basin of water and some clean towels on hand. Depending upon the size of your group, you might need multiple basins. After you start your lesson, have everyone wash their hands. There's no need for soap. Just let everyone feel the sensation of washed hands. It's also important to do this in a "public" kind of way, so people get the sense of others watching them take part in this most unexpected "ritual."

In doing this, you're taking part in a tradition that permeates the entire Old Testament, and the New.

Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?
The one who has clean hands and a pure heart ... (Psalm 24:2-3)

While the pure heart is far more important than clean hands, ritual washing is much more common in Jewish life than most followers of Jesus have comprehended. It was required for the priests at the Tabernacle and the Temple. Instructions for ritual washing are common in the Law of Moses, and the people of Jesus' day took those instructions seriously. You'll find ritual washing pools around the ruins of synagogues and Jewish homes as you tour Israel today.

Hand washing (or full-scale immersion) makes us feel clean. It draws our attention to the dirt that needs to be washed away, whether the "dirt" in our lives is physical or spiritual. Before this lesson is over, you'll take your group to the Pool of Siloam, where ritual washing was practiced by thousands of people as they arrived in Jerusalem. Jesus sent a blind man to these waters for the most eye-opening experience Jerusalem had ever seen!

Lead a review of this week's lessons.

Day 1: Abraham

Make sure your group understands the genesis of the Jewish family tree. Abram (Abraham) moved from Ur (Iraq) to the Promised Land (Israel). Though he had other children, Isaac was the only son of Abraham and Sarah. Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons named Jacob and Esau. Jacob's name was changed by God to Israel, and his 12 sons were all namesakes for the 12 tribes of the growing community.

One of the most important stories in the entire Bible is the way God "tested" Abraham, commanding him to sacrifice his only son at a place God would show him. Be sure to fill in the blanks on page 86 with your group.

While some in your group will know this story well, it is likely that many will not. Point out the connection between the place of Abraham's test and the place where Jesus died. While we can't be 100 percent sure that Abraham and Isaac traveled to the hill that would one day be Jerusalem, it seems a very good possibility. This connection of place and story is impossible to miss!

Ask for observations on why God would take Abram and Isaac to the site that would one day be the place where Jesus died. Ask them about the ram that was sacrificed as a substitute offering for Isaac. He had expected to sacrifice a lamb. Does the "lamb of God" title for Jesus also come into play here?

Day 2: Review the story of Moses and the burning bush.

Read Exodus 3:1-15.

The name of God is the focus of the passage, and of this lesson. The Amplified Bible translates the name of God as: "I Am Who I Am and What I Am, and I Will Be What I Will Be." In Hebrew, the name of God is a mysterious word, and translators have struggled with it for centuries.

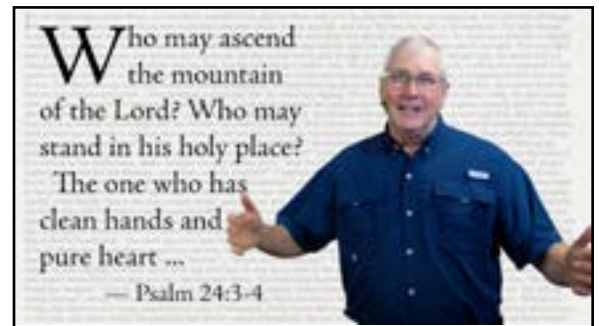
That includes the translators of the first Old Testament written in Greek. Since the New Testament was written in Greek, that allows us to see why Jesus infuriated the religious leaders at the Temple when he said, "Before Abraham was, I am!" Suddenly it makes sense why some in the crowd were ready to stone Jesus.

You may want to take your group back to John 1:1-14. John's prologue has some of the most lofty language related to Jesus you'll find anywhere in the New Testament. In the decades that passed between his time with Jesus and the day when he wrote his Gospel, statements from Jesus like this one must have played a big role in how he introduced Jesus to the world.

Days 3-5: A blind man sees; seeing men are blind

Watch the video. Prepare in advance to show the "Week Five Video." This video (6:52) will show some great illustrations of the Temple, the Pool of Siloam and the street that connected the two places. You'll also see some new excavations of these locations. After the video, your group may want to share some observations or new insights they've gained.

Whatever their comments, be sure to draw the connection between Isaiah 6:8-10 and what Jesus said in John 9:39. That's the OT-NT connection. That's the Bible that inside your Bible!



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Review the chart of creation on page 97. Fill in each day with a summary of what was created. Obviously, nothing was created on Day 7, the "Sabbath." It's difficult to comprehend, but the controversy over the healing of the blind man wasn't over the amazing miracle. It was the fact that Jesus had "created" mud on Shabbat. Since God had created human beings from the dust of the earth and his own breath, this was a shocking thing for Jesus to do. It must have been mind blowing for his critics. Jesus was pretending to be God? And yet ... a man they knew to be blind is standing among them, celebrating perfect vision because of what Jesus had done!

The man who'd received the miracle also gained spiritual sight. The exercise on page 101 will help your group see the progression he made as he slowly understood who Jesus was. This is a great opportunity to ask members of your group about their own understanding of who Jesus is.

Ask them: Did they understand everything about Jesus when they first decided to become a follower? Is there ever a point when we comprehend everything we need to know about him? Is this "progression" of

understanding a natural part of discipleship? The idea that we continually grow into a full understanding of who Jesus is should be an encouraging word for all of us!

Finally, review the “Selah” lesson on page 102. Your group has made it halfway through this Bible study, and that’s worth a celebration. Make sure they see how simple it is to be a disciple of Jesus. Even by faithfully doing the lessons in a Bible study like this one, they are making progress in following this very clear commandment of Jesus. Someone might want to share his or her thoughts from this exercise. You may even want people to break up into groups of two or three in order to pray specifically for one another.

Week Six

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Week Six Review

In our culture, the idea that Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” must seem like one of the least controversial images in his life. But when Jesus laid claim to that title, the people hearing him reacted by calling him “insane” or “demon possessed.” You might want to start your review of this week’s lesson by reading John 10:20 and 10:39. Not everyone was pleased with what Jesus had said!

Memory verse: Have one or two volunteers quote this week’s memory verse.

Icebreaker: You’ve probably got some animal lovers in your group. Get a few volunteers to (briefly) tell about their pets, including their names and a bit about their personalities. If they haven’t made it clear, ask your volunteers if they love their pets. Shepherds love their sheep, even though sheep fall under the umbrella of livestock rather than pets. Shepherds may name their sheep and goats, and they certainly know their personalities. They work hard, every day, to provide food, water and protection for their flocks. In short, a good shepherd loves his or her sheep. Not surprisingly, sheep and goats know and follow their shepherds!

Watch the video. Prepare in advance to show the “Week Six Video.” This video (8:18) will offer some great footage of sheep and their shepherds, and help explain the concept of “bad shepherds” and the ultimate “Good Shepherd.”



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Lead a review of this week’s lessons.

Day 1: Bad shepherds

Use the verses on pages 106-107 to emphasize the “shepherds of Israel.” Shepherds were leaders, whether they were political leaders or spiritual leaders. Ask your group about “shepherds” in your own culture. Are some of our leaders “good shepherds,” while others might be “bad shepherds?” What “shepherding qualities do you want to see in a pastor? Would these same qualities work in the business or political world?

Use the exercise on page 109 to list the ways Israel’s leaders had become “bad shepherds.” That will help identify who in our own culture might be “bad shepherds,” too!

Day 2: The ultimate Good Shepherd

All of Ezekiel 34 comes into play in this lesson. Because Jesus and his audience knew Ezekiel’s writings so well, Ezekiel’s writings are just below the surface of the entire conversation. Ezekiel said Israel’s earthly shepherds had been so bad, God had promised to one day come and do the job himself!

Use the exercise on page 110 to list all the qualities God would have as the ultimate Good Shepherd.

That said, who was Jesus claiming to be when he said he was the “Good Shepherd?”

If someone in the group is not convinced these comments were controversial, have them read John 10:19-21. This is practicing the art of finding the Bible that’s inside your Bible. We usually don’t see anything controversial about Jesus claiming to be the “Good Shepherd.” But some who heard him say those words called him crazy for saying such things! The missing link is the Old Testament. Jesus and his audience knew it well. We often miss these OT-NT connections.

Day 3: Death and the Book of Life

Here’s a rare chance to get in the minds of everyone who knew Jesus. What did they think about life after death? Before Jesus, what was the belief system that gave them hope for life after death?

Make sure your group sees the multiple references to the “books” mentioned in the Old Testament and in Revelation. The final book of the New Testament is saturated with references to the Old Testament!

The tradition of people hoping for a resurrection miracle for up to three days (page 113) is also important. But perhaps the most discussion you should have is over the final question of the third lesson. Why didn’t the resurrection of Lazarus convince everyone in Jerusalem that Jesus was the Messiah? Likewise, why don’t people believe today?

Day 4: The anointing

Mary’s anointing of Jesus is full of OT connecting points. Israel’s political leaders were anointed, as were priests and other religious leaders. By the time Jesus lived, people were also anointing their deceased loved ones. So the symbolism of Mary’s action could be seen as an anointing of Jesus as king, as Messiah, and as one about to die. When Mary performed this act, Jesus only a few days before he would be crucified.

As for connecting the OT to the NT, you’ve got a wonderful opportunity to make sure your group sees that Jesus’ short — even terse — statement that “you will always have the poor among you” was actually a direct quotation from Deuteronomy 15.

Have your group read Deuteronomy 15:1-11. Clearly, God commanded his people to be generous with the less fortunate. When Jesus quoted a phrases from these 11 verses, everyone in the room knew he was referring to the unmistakable command to be generous with those who are less fortunate! They had heard the words and practiced acts of generosity many times!

Day 5: Royalty

Ask your group about traditions surrounding a transition of power in modern times. They’ll probably speak of pageantry, speeches, a swearing-in ceremony or even religious rituals. Hopefully, someone will also mention a parade of some sort. Parades have long been a way for public leaders to formally announce that a new leader has come into power.

Read 1 Kings 1:33-35. This short ride on a mule or a donkey became an important way for the kings of Judah to formally take power in Jerusalem. As mentioned on page 121, Judas Maccabeus had come into Jerusalem on a donkey (with countless palm branches waving in the air) only 200 years before Jesus was born. When Jesus came into the same city in the same manner, no one missed the symbolism. He was claiming to be the new king!

Week Seven

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Week Seven Review

By the time you reach the end of this week's review, you'll be dealing with the betrayal of Judas and the very painful subject of suicide. Pray carefully and deal with these issues sensitively. Most families have experienced the pain of suicide. Someone in your group may have struggled with thoughts of taking his or her own life. Aim to cover the biblical material, but keep an eye on your group. If someone in your own circle of family or friends has taken his or her life, you might feel led to use that example as a way of empathizing with others who've known the same loss.

However you approach it, address the issue quickly and openly, expressing sensitivity as you do. If your group has done the homework, they're already dealing with these complex issues. Pray throughout your time together that the discussion you lead can be used for healing where needed, and for biblical clarity throughout.

Memory verse: This week's memory verse is longer and more difficult than many in this workbook. It might be a good idea to arrange in advance for a member of your group to quote it. Since the message is so central to the message of Jesus, you also might want to do a group exercise. Quote one phrase, and have your group quote it after you. Quote the next phrase, have them repeat it, and then quote both phrases together. Your goal is to make sure they walk away with the concept of serving others sacrificially, just as Jesus served his disciples.

Icebreaker: One option is to wash the feet of everyone in the room. That can be done by the leader for all the members, or in smaller groups, as people wash the feet of others in their circle. That, of course, is a very radical "icebreaker!" Not every small group is ready for that kind of intimacy. Another option is to have people share a time when they found themselves caring for someone in a way that involved physical touch. Perhaps they had to bathe an aging parent or a sibling recovering from surgery. Such an experience carries many powerful emotions. How did serving in such an intimate way feel? Likewise, what is it like to be cared for in that way? You'll get lots of answers describing the humility of the situation, and a deep gratefulness for care received. Don't be surprised if you see a few tears!

As a transition to the heart of this week's lesson, remind your group that Jesus washed the feet of all of his disciples, including Judas Iscariot! Jesus may have had to move the heavy money bag Judas was carrying so he could wash the feet of his betrayer!

Lead a review of this week's lessons.

Day 1: Moriah

You've already covered the Abraham story in Week 5, so this lesson acts like a review of that material. As you review the journey Abraham and Isaac took to Moriah (almost certainly the location of Jerusalem's Old City), cover the material on page 127. Abraham and Isaac had expected to sacrifice a lamb at the place God would

show them. Instead, they sacrificed a ram. They also called that location, “The Lord will Provide.” From this point on in this Bible study, we’re very close to the day when Jesus, the “Lamb of God,” provided the ultimate act of salvation.

Is it important whether or not Abraham and Isaac stood exactly where Jerusalem is today, or perhaps in the same location where Jesus was crucified? We’ll never know the GPS coordinates of either event. What is important is that Jewish people strongly believe that Jerusalem was the location where the sacrifice of Isaac almost happened. So when the followers of Jesus made the place-and-story connection between Abraham’s test and the death of Jesus, they believed God had finally provided the ultimate sacrifice. And it had happened exactly where it had been promised!

Day 2: Listen!

Cover any material you feel needs to be covered concerning times when people heard an audible voice from God. The most important part of this day’s work relates to its final question on page 131. Have you ever heard from God? Leave plenty of time for people to tell others about occasions when they’ve heard from the Lord. Help direct those conversations to an act of obedience. God doesn’t speak to us often. When it happens, we must obey!

Reading the Bible every day is one of the best ways to “hear” from God. A person who systematically reads his or her Bible every day may have stories of how a particular verse or passage arrived with perfect timing. This, too, is a way we can hear from God. Celebrate those stories, and encourage your group to practice the discipline of daily Bible reading!

Day 3: Glory

This lesson gives you an opportunity to review a fact that is often forgotten. John the disciple was a person just like us, yet he was given the responsibility to write down what he’d seen in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. If you had been in his sandals, what would you have written?

Obviously, God led John to write down some of the things he’d witnessed. But John’s Jewish upbringing and his deep love of Scripture played roles in what he wrote, too. The exercise on page 132 illustrates this concept in John 12:37-40. John quotes Isaiah twice in this passage. Either summarize the two passages he quotes (Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 6) or read them. Make sure your group absorbs the impact of these powerful passages.

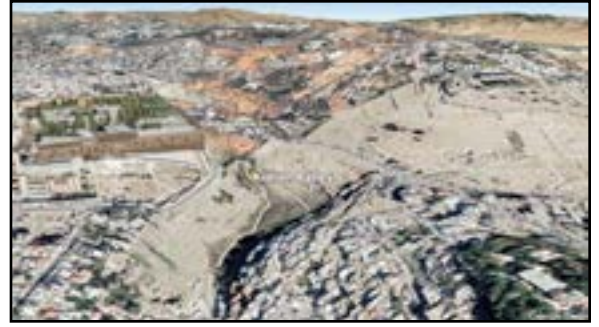
The most shocking thing John wrote comes one verse later:

Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him. — John 12:41

This is a stunning statement in so many ways. It might be good to have your group explore all the ramifications of it. Remember, John had been an eyewitness to the most amazing events in his generation. He’d seen miracles. He’d seen the crucifixion and the resurrection. By the time he writes the Gospel of John, another 20 years have passed. Now he’s seen the miraculous growth of the church. He’s also had another 20 years to search out the Old Testament and talk with other disciples who are doing the same thing. His conclusion? Isaiah’s greatest prophecies were all pointing to Jesus! Though Isaiah had lived centuries earlier, his preaching had already been pointing to Jesus!

Days 4-5: The Betrayal

Watch the video. Prepare in advance to show the “Week Seven Video.” This video (9:16) will walk through the betrayals of David’s close friend Ahithophel and of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. The connections between these two stories provide a classic case of discovering the Bible inside your Bible.



Be sure to save enough time for this material. It is likely to be the most sensitive and important topic of the week. Pay close attention to anyone in your group who has suffered recently from the suicide of a family member or friend.

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But by all means, cover this topic! Much confusion swirls around the person of Judas. Many people even feel sorry for him! Make a list of points you want to cover and discuss. Among the possibilities:

- Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, including Judas. Jesus loved his disciples and gave Judas every opportunity to follow him completely. Jesus held out an offer of grace to Judas even at the last meal they had together. But Judas walked away from that offer of grace. It was one of several poor choices he made during the last week of Jesus’ life.
- David’s friend and trusted advisor Ahithophel comes into play in this story. Jesus would refer to Ahithophel’s betrayal as he spoke of his own betrayer. Since his disciples knew the stories of the Bible so well, it is almost certain that Judas got the message even as Jesus made subtle references to David’s pain. Did this connection from Scripture drive Judas even further away from Jesus? Does the Bible’s message sometime drive people today away from Jesus? Uncompromising truth often seems confrontational and offensive to a person determined to live his or her own life in an unbiblical lifestyle.
- Ahithophel hanged himself. This is the only suicide in the Old Testament that’s not connected to a time of battle or war-like situation. If Judas knew this story well, he might have felt somewhat “obligated” to end his life in the same manner. It’s possible he was even trying to express remorse for his actions and sending a “biblical” message to Jesus and the disciples that he recognized his error.
- The facts of Judas’ choices eliminate any need to feel sorry for him. Do the exercise on page 139 as a group. Point out that all of this information comes from eyewitness reports. The emotions or imagination of someone living 2,000 years later does not refute the truth of eyewitness testimony. We live in an era when people are pretending that there are no consequences for choices. You may want to address this life-saving truth. All choices — whether wise or foolish — lead to consequences!
- Other disciples either went to the cross (John) or were reunited with Jesus after making their own embarrassing choices. Judas could have gone to the cross, too. If he had wanted to signal his regret, he should have done so personally, at the cross. Could he have been forgiven of his sin? We’ll never know, *because Judas never repented.*

This is a critically important point and a great way to end your group discussion. We’ve all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. We’ve all made choices we wish we hadn’t made. We’re all dealing with the consequences of poor choices. However, as John wrote in 1 John 1:9, we can all confess our sins today to the one who is “faithful and just.” When we do, God “will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Week Eight

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Week Eight Review

Ready for some hiking? If you had been in the crowd that followed Jesus, you'd have done a lot of walking! People in the Old and New Testaments walked to work, to school, to the synagogue, and to Jerusalem for the festivals. Entire families traveled together for events like Passover. Mary and Joseph made the trip with their growing family every year! Read Luke 2:41 for that detail.

Memory verse: Get one or more volunteers to quote this week's memory verse. Ask someone else to expound upon what this passage means. It's not complicated ... so make sure you keep it simple!

Icebreaker: Almost certainly, someone in your group has done some hiking. It might have been for fun, it might have been for military service, or it might have been on a day when a car broke down, leaving one of your motorists walking for help. Most of us are completely unfamiliar with what it's like to walk to a neighboring town, so ask your serious hikers to share from their experiences. If no one in your group has personal stories to tell, brainstorm some things that would be important if you were to hike to a town 20 miles away. What about water, food and safety? What if you had to do this without enough money to rent a room at night? Where would you use the restroom ... if there were no modern-day restrooms? Do your best to get into the sandals of the people who followed Jesus.

Watch the video. Prepare in advance to show the "Week Eight Video." This video (3:18) is the shortest of the entire Bible study. You'll see several ancient roads (paths) that will help you better illustrate some of the Bible's most common instructions. When Jesus told his disciples that he was "the way," he was using the same word they would have known for "road" or "path."



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Lead a review of this week's lessons.

Day 1: The Way

Jesus used illustrations that communicated great truths in very simple ways. When he called himself "the way" (John 14:6), he was laying out a road for success that disciples would follow for centuries to come.

The Bible is full of "path" illustrations. You can see a sampling of those verses on page 144. Every person in the Bible usually walked to their destinations. Spend an hour hiking in the land of the Bible — or your own neighborhood — and you might read your Bible differently! In the words of the Bible, people always went "up" to Jerusalem, or "down" from the great city. Hikers notice the hills!

Besides casting a "walking-everywhere" vision, make sure your group sees something even more important.

For centuries, God's people had longed to be with God. Some had even dared to ask to see God!

Have two volunteers read Exodus 33:18-23 and 1 Kings 19:7-13. Moses and Elijah both wanted to see God, and both were denied that honor. Isaiah would be caught up into the presence of God, but his indescribable experience took him no nearer to God than the "train of his robe" (Isaiah 6:1).

What a shocking change of pace to picture Jesus eating a meal with his disciples! In the person of Jesus, God was suddenly in the midst of his people like never before.

Day 2: Obey

In our constant celebration of God's amazing grace, it's sometimes easy to forget that God has high expectations for his people.

Get a volunteer to read the words of Deuteronomy 8:2, as it is filled out on page 147.

Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

While that might sound like "Old Testament" theology, Jesus echoed this expectation quite clearly in his own teaching. Walking through the exercise on page 148 could be a good way to drive that point home.

Ask for volunteers to read what they wrote in answer to the key question on page 149. How do they explain the proper balance between God's grace and God's expectations that we should follow his commands?

Need some good illustrations about grace and expectations?

- Married people enjoy the benefits of a committed relationship and understand the expectation to be committed exclusively to that relationship above all others.
- Workers are expected to show up and work in exchange for benefits like a paycheck.
- Team members who want to share in the glory on game day are expected to show up on the practice fields, weight rooms and training meetings.

We should not be surprised that Jesus has expectations for people who are saved by grace!

Day 3: Harvest

Someone who takes the expectations of the Bible seriously will produce a "harvest" for God. Isaiah's parable of the vineyard and the teaching of Jesus about producing a fruitful harvest emphasize this. You may want to devote time to reviewing these words.

But someone in your group may be profoundly impacted by the simple illustration on page 152 that producing fruit is a *natural* process of discipleship. Just as banana trees don't worry about not producing oranges, neither should a Christian gifted for acts of service feel guilty about not being a teacher. Evangelists hold an important and prominent role in the church, but not everyone can be a gifted preacher.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 and ask for volunteers to share their thoughts on their own gifts, and whether or not they've ever felt guilty for not possessing one of the other gifts. At the conclusion of this time, read 1 Corinthians 12:27-30. By the way, some of the most famous words in the Bible are in the very next chapter and are a reminder that "the greatest of these ... is love." The lesson? Use whatever gift you have in a spirit of love for others, and for the Lord.

Day 4: Friends

Jesus overwhelmed the people he met with accepting love. Even so, he had expectations for those who wanted to enter into a friendship with him. This marks the third straight day in this study of this theme. All of this teaching came on the night before the crucifixion.

Ask for a volunteer to share what he or she wrote on page 153. Do we have expectations for friends? Should we be surprised that Jesus would have high expectations for anyone entering into a friendship with him?

Before leaving this theme, it might help to connect the dots again between the Old and New Testaments. Abraham was the “friend of God,” and God tested him mightily. Moses and Joshua were clearly men held in high esteem by God. Both of them were expected to live by the highest of God’s moral standards.

As a preview of the coming details of the crucifixion, you can point out again how Jesus constantly quoted the Old Testament. Have the words of Psalm 35:19 and Psalm 69:4 ready.

Psalm 69:21 is also relevant, since it also seems to be a prophetic promise related to the crucifixion (John 19:29). Only two weeks are left in this study. The crucifixion and its important ties to the Old Testament are just ahead!

Day 5: Shunned

Following Jesus has long come with a cost. If you had lived when Jesus was alive, you may have had to put family plans, financial security and social standing on hold simply in order to hear what he had to say. Following as a disciple required a higher cost, still. And as opposition to Jesus arose, some were “shunned” in their own communities. It wouldn’t be long before members of that first generation of disciples lost their lives because of their commitment to Christ.

If necessary, cover the background material on pages 156-157. But be sure to discuss the costs followers of Jesus may have to pay today. Are any in your group already seeing conflict at home, at work or in the community because of their commitment to following Jesus? Does our society have the ability to “shun” those who don’t agree with non-biblical standards of morality?

There is a cost for following Jesus, and we shouldn’t downplay it. Instead, we should go back to where we started and remember what Jesus has asked of us. Perhaps you could end your review with the group quoting this week’s memory verse:

“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.” (John 14:21)

Week Nine

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Week Nine Review

From start to finish, this week’s lessons are saturated with references to the Old Testament. That’s not accidental. As John reached the climax of this amazing story, he drew more and more from the pages of his Bible. The connecting points between the Old and New Testaments are too many to count!

Memory verse: Get one or more volunteers to quote this week’s memory verse. This is not one of the more familiar passages, so you might want to ask a volunteer to have it ready in advance.

Icebreaker: Gather some cups that symbolize different things and have them on display. Asking a member of your group to tackle this task is a great way to involve others in small group “ownership.” With the cups on display, ask your group to identify each drinking vessel and its purpose. This will get them in the right frame of mind to consider the symbolic cups of the Passover meal. Some examples:

- A glass from a wedding or anniversary celebration.
- Cups decorated for Christmas or another holiday. Several holidays have special cups!
- A communion cup from your church.
- A cup decorated with your favorite team’s logo.
- A coffee cup for work or your morning quiet time.
- A cup decorated with birthday wishes or congratulations for a milestone in life like graduation or retirement.
- A cup from a child’s tea set.

Watch the video. Prepare in advance to show the “Week Nine Video.” This video (4:58) will help you illustrate the “untouchable” nature of God to people like Moses and Elijah, and the almost incomprehensible nearness of Jesus to his disciples.

Lead a review of this week’s lessons.

Day 1: Revealed

Listening to the prayer of Jesus in John 17 allows us to learn many things about Jesus. Obviously, he loved his disciples. He also prayed for disciples yet to come. Amazingly, he also referred to Scripture as he prayed! Jesus had become so saturated with Scripture, the Text showed up even as he prayed in a private moment.

The reference is apparently to Psalm 41 and the story of David and Ahithophel. Just as David was betrayed



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by a close friend, Jesus was betrayed by Judas. That both betrayals happened on the Mount of Olives only confirms that Jesus was connecting his story to David's story, and his pain to David's pain. This is a place-and-story connection you covered in Week 7.

It would be a worthy goal for any of us to know the Bible so well that it naturally shows up in our prayer lives, even when no one is listening. At a minimum, that would require a daily intake of Scripture for several years!

In his prayer, Jesus made references to his own glory and his role as God incarnate. Had he made claims like this in public, he likely would have already been executed. Remind your group that John is listening to a private prayer, and not a public speech. In a way, that makes what Jesus prayed even more radical.

Ask two volunteers with strong voices to share in a reading assignment. Reader One will read Isaiah 42:8. Reader Two would counter with John 17:1. Repeat the exercise with Isaiah 48:11 and John 17:5. These verses are on page 162. The more dramatic the reading, the better. The contrast is stunning and the point should be clear enough. Jesus believed he had a rightful place alongside the Father's eternal glory!

Day 2: The cup

There are several ways to cover the powerful material in this lesson. Primary among them is to make sure your group understands that the Passover meal (along with its four symbolic cups) is the same meal Christians know as the "Last Supper" or the "Lord's Supper."

Going over the "cup of wrath" language on page 167 is also important. Anytime Jesus spoke of a "cup," knowing the Old Testament "cup" connections will help us understand what he wanted to communicate. This is a classic example of finding the "Bible inside your Bible."

The "Fifth Cup" that appears at most Passover meals today is connected to the "Cup of Wrath" imagery. No one would want to drink the cup of God's judgment! [This short video](#) (7:15) illustrates this point in a very creative way. You may want to show it to your group or send them a link to the video earlier in the week.

If it would be appropriate for your group, consider celebrating communion together at the end of this week's session. If you choose to do this, move this day's discussion to the end of your group session.

Day 3: Unholy

It's difficult for us to think ill of religious leaders, especially when they make the pages of the Bible. But Caiaphas and his associates are among the most corrupt religious leaders who have ever lived. Appointed by the Roman governor, these men served Rome and their own interests.

The very fact that Caiaphas and Annas are named as high priests together is evidence of how far the priesthood had drifted away from its original — and holy — purpose. It wasn't possible for two men to be the high priest at the same time.

John the Baptist railed against these men. And don't forget what Jesus did when he entered the Temple Mount grounds on the last week of his life. He was furious that a place meant for prayer had become a place where powerful, ungodly men made enormous sums of money.

On page 172, the Ten Commandments are listed. In an effort to silence Jesus, Caiaphas and his chief priests schemed and lied so they could execute an innocent man. Their lifestyles were a testimony to coveting. While they carried out the rituals of worship, their lives bore witness to anything but holiness. There's a question at the bottom of page 172 that may be worth a discussion. What's more important — ritual purity or genuine piety?

Day 4: Christ

The word “Christ” means “king.” At a glance, this explains why Pilate and the Romans were already keeping an eye on the popular rabbi from Nazareth. It also explains why Pilate would order a sign with “King of the Jews” attached to the cross of Jesus. Rome tolerated no challenges to its authority.

One exercise you might want to do with your group is to list all the ways Jesus was mocked as king (page 173). Another is to compare the prophetic vision of Isaiah 9 with the conversation Jesus had with Pilate (page 174) and Paul’s description of Jesus from Ephesians 1 (page 175).

Day 5: Vinegar

In addition to the obvious connection between Psalm 69 and the wine vinegar Jesus was offered on the cross, the fact that Jesus died during the 24-hour period of Passover is yet another example of the “Bible inside your Bible.” With the study coming to a close, repeating this truth will help your group prepare for a lifetime of connecting the Old Testament to their understanding of the New Testament.

Most Christians didn’t grow up celebrating Passover. Therefore, most are not aware of the symbolism that permeates the entire meal. That John would mention the hyssop plant (John 19:29) is clear evidence that he saw the Passover connection perfectly. He had even included the “Lamb of God” title John the Baptizer had given to Jesus early in his ministry (John 1:29). There was no rational reason for John to mention what kind of stalk was raised to the lips of Jesus, or even that it was offered ... except for John’s well-versed knowledge of Scripture and Jewish practices.

If you live where hyssop grows, you may be able to find some for your group gathering. But whether you have any hyssop or not, make sure your group makes the connection. The blood of the original Passover lambs was collected in bowls. Families “painted” the doorways of their homes with that blood, using hyssop branches as their “brushes.” You’ll find the explicit instructions in Exodus 12:22. If this is new information for your group, rest assured it made an immediate impression on any Jewish person at the foot of the cross.

On a side note, this is also an indication that Jesus was crucified at a much lower height than most paintings or movies would depict. Hyssop branches aren’t very long. The mouth of Jesus must have been within reach of a soldier standing on the ground. Scholars tell us that crucifixions typically took place on busy roads and at eye level. Far from hiding their crucifixions, the Romans wanted everyone to see what happened to criminals and rebels.

Week Ten

Discovering the Bible Inside Your Bible: The Gospel of John

Week Ten Review

Here's the "final exam" of this Bible study! By now, you'll not need to convince your audience that there's a lot of Old Testament in the New Testament, or that Jesus was constantly quoting the Law, the prophets and the psalms. He often referred to people and events recorded in the Text. Even so, it may be difficult to shake the idea that God "turned his face away" from Jesus while he was dying on the cross. That tradition is evidence that we've been reading a lot of what Jesus had to say out of context. What treasures we've been missing!

Memory verse: Get one or more volunteers to quote this week's memory verse. You might want to do a review of all the memory verses. If you start the first phrase of a memory verse, someone may be able to finish the phrase. Do this in a way that celebrates whatever level of success has been achieved. It's not easy for people in our culture to memorize *anything!* Remind your group that when we memorize Scripture, we're doing something Jesus did. This is one way any of us can literally be like Jesus!

Icebreaker: Ask your group if anyone knows some phrases that are lost in translation. If you need some funny examples, check out [this article from Expedia](#). You could even print those examples for people to share, or have a contest as to what these idioms from other languages mean. The point of the exercise is to help people remember that the Bible was written in multiple languages ... and none of them are English. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. Jesus and his audiences most often spoke Aramaic. But the New Testament was written in Greek, the most common language of that day. This will be especially important when working with Psalm 22. When a quotation of the Old Testament is slightly different in the New Testament, we must remember the difficult work of translation.

Watch the video. Prepare in advance to show the "Week Ten Video." This video (6:45) will help you cover many of the connecting points between Psalm 22 and the life of Jesus.

Lead a review of this week's lessons.

Day 1: Psalm 22

You may want to go over this amazing psalm section by section. You might prefer to ask your group to comment on insight they gained ... assuming they've done the homework.

Whatever the case, don't let them miss the impact of David's haunting song. How did he write these words 900 years before Jesus would quote them on the cross? Did David wonder why such words were overwhelming him, even as he sang them? By the way, crucifixion wasn't a common form of execution when David was alive. That would come more than 400 years later. That makes Psalm 22 seem more like prophecy than ever!



[Click here](#) or visit experienceisraelnow.com/john.

Day 2: Curse

Be sure your group makes the connection between the Old Testament “curse” of someone “hung on a pole” and the haste to remove the bodies from the crosses as sunset approached.

Just as important, make sure your group sees how this insight is somewhat hidden inside John’s Gospel. Have someone in your group read John 19:31. If you hadn’t been in this particular Bible study, would you have known the connection with Deuteronomy 21:22-23 or the two events recorded for us in the book of Joshua (page 189)? This is an excellent opportunity to point out the value of owning a study Bible. As your group prepares to finish this study, give them tools to continue discovering the “Bible inside their Bibles!”

Day 3: Alive!

For the purpose of this study, focus on John’s comment about his own understanding of Scripture. Have someone read John 20:9. John’s writing style is somewhat confusing. He writes about himself as if he’s another person. But what he’s telling us is that he did not make all the connecting points between the life of Jesus and the Old Testament until a good bit of time had gone by. Even though Jesus personally taught John before and after the resurrection, he might have needed years to absorb it all. This should be encouraging for us. If John needed time to discover these treasures, it’s likely to take us years to discover them, too. We should enjoy the process and assume the learning will never end.

Also, be sure to point out that Jesus himself taught his disciples to look to all parts of the Old Testament to see how the crucifixion and resurrection had been foretold in the Text. Have two volunteers read Luke 24:27 and Luke 24:44-48.

Most likely, the words of Isaiah 53 are some of the most familiar words of prophecy to members of your group. You probably will find a ready volunteer to share insight from this amazing passage.

Day 4: Grace

John 21 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible for people who’ve been followers of Jesus for a long time. Like Simon Peter, long-time followers of Christ are acutely aware of their own sin. Why can’t we overcome temptation and our personal sin addictions?

The fact that Jesus gave Simon Peter another opportunity to follow is a great comfort to *every* disciple of Jesus. There is no limit of the grace God has to offer! Someone in your group may be willing to share their thoughts on grace. Be sensitive to how the Holy Spirit is leading you to guide this discussion. It could be one of the highlights of this Bible study.

Day 5: Matthew

Finally, get four volunteers to share what they know of the four women in Matthew’s genealogy (page 201).

Tamar, the mother of Perez and Zerah, tricked her father-in-law Judah by dressing like a prostitute and waiting for him in a distant community. That’s amazing for both its repulsive nature and the fact that Matthew intentionally included Tamar and the twins that came from this act in his genealogy. If he had wanted to make a list of somewhat respectable, sin-free people, the project was doomed just as it began!

Rahab, the mother of Boaz, ran an inn in Jericho that had a less-than-stellar reputation. Was it a house of prostitution? The Bible doesn’t say, but we’ve not named our daughters Rahab since that day, just in case.

On the other hand, we’ve long been naming our daughters after Ruth. She was a wonderful woman who

charmed all of Bethlehem. But she was a Moabite, and all Moabites were banned from the things of God! Even so, she's in the family tree of Jesus.

Bathsheba is the final woman in this genealogy, and you probably know her story. If we were looking for four women of unblemished character, we've come up well short of the goal. On the other hand, all of these women rebounded from difficult circumstances, poor choices and disappointing life events. Aren't you glad there's room in the Bible's family for imperfect people?

The purpose of this final exercise is to point your group in the direction of another Gospel and more Bible study. In fact, Matthew's Gospel has far more connecting points with the Old Testament than John's Gospel!

Wrapping things up

Be sure to congratulate your group for completing a 10-week Bible study. For some, it might have been a first "deep dive" into Scripture. Others will have completed many such studies. But for all, this is a time for a celebration.

And it's a time to plan your next venture into a new study of God's Word. Spend some time looking for options before this final meeting, or chatting with key leaders in your group about where to go next. There's much more to discover inside the Bible ... that's inside your Bible!