

## Group Preparation Questions

The following pages contain some introductory notes and then sets of preparation questions for each study, so that group members may be helped to get the most out of their time together. Also included are study tips and a list of recommended books.

**Prep. questions.** One of the lessons that we hope members will learn, during the year of studying John's Gospel, is the value of studying the passage before coming to the group study. This may be new to them but, in our experience, when people do prepare like this it transforms the midweek meeting! For each study, therefore, there are a few questions to help people get to the heart of the passage. Usually the last question will ask them to think through the implications of the passage for us today. These final questions call for hard thinking, so that the study of God's word does indeed result in the changed lives of His people.

**Study tips.** As members study John's Gospel we hope that they will learn much about how to study the Bible more effectively. We have therefore included a number of study tips which we hope will give them a head start when approaching a passage, and also build up their confidence for studying the Bible in future.

**Recommended books.** A list of titles that have encouraged and built up Christians over many years. Reading Christian books will complement the *Read Mark Learn* studies, as members grow in their knowledge and love of God, and discover for themselves what it means to 'have life in His name.'

## For Discussion: Week 1, September 12, 2018

### I N T R O D U C T I O N

## A Gospel overview

The best way to get started in John's Gospel is to read it! Set aside some time when you can read the whole book at one sitting. Read fairly rapidly, trying to get a feel for the book as a whole: the main themes, the structure, the language. The point of this exercise is to take in the big picture, so don't worry about understanding all the details at this stage. At the end note down your first impressions. (If you struggle to make mental notes, jot down a few very brief comments with references as you read, but don't lose your momentum.)

### John's purpose

*...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. (20:31)*

This is an important verse, towards the end of the Gospel, which tells us what was John's intention in writing. If you have the opportunity to read through the Gospel again, keep these questions in mind:

What does John say about Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God?

What does it mean to 'have life' in His name?

What does a right response of belief in Him look like?

## John 1:1–18 God on earth!

Prep . questions

List all of the attributes and activities of the Word.

Read verses 10–13 and describe, in your own words:

the bad news

the good news

What is John the Baptist's role?

How can I be sure of what God is like?

## Group Preparation Questions

### Study Tip: Observation

One of the essential skills of Bible Study is that of observation – looking carefully at a passage to see what it really says. The following questions may seem obvious, but they are worth asking:

- What are the main events in the passage?
- Do I understand the words?
- Am I reading what the passage says or what I want it to say? It is easy to have presuppositions about what a passage is saying.
- Are there any surprises? This is a good question to ask, to avoid being swayed by presuppositions.



## Group Preparation Questions

**Study Tip: Knowing when to cross-reference:** Some cross-references provide the key to understanding a passage; others are just confusing. As a rule:

- ☒ Look up passages to which the author points you –either by means of a direct quote, or by placing a clue in the text (e.g. ‘It was Passover’).
- ☒ The Old Testament context is always relevant and important; New Testament authors knew the Old Testament well.
- ☒ Don’t compare details in different Gospels. The four Gospels were written by different authors, each with a different purpose.



## John 2:23–3:36 Entry into the kingdom of God

### Prep . questions

How does the beginning of chapter 3 follow on from the end of chapter 2?

What are the requirements for entering the kingdom of God?  
How does Ezekiel 36:24–29 explain them?

How does the story of the bronze snake (Numbers 21:4-9) relate to the gaining of eternal life (vv. 14,15)?

What do verses 19–21 tell us about why people do or do not believe?

These verses contain some tough teaching. List the different reasons given in verses 22–36 as to why we should accept it.



## Study Tip: Context

We rarely open books in the middle and expect to understand whatever we find, yet people often do this with the Bible. Context is crucial to the meaning of any text and the text of the Bible is no exception. We need to keep in mind three kinds of context:

- ☒ ***The immediate context***, provided by the verses before and after the ones we are studying. This is largely a matter of good observation.
- ☒ ***The wider context***, provided by the book we are studying or – in most books – by the section of the book our passage is in.
- ☒ ***The whole Bible context***. In this sense, the Bible is one book with one story. Where does this passage fit into the grand sweep of salvation history? Does it have Old Testament background? Not the easiest kind of context to work out, but essential.

## John 4:1–54 The Saviour of the world!

Prep . questions

What issues from chapter 3 are still in evidence in chapter 4?

What new issues appear in chapter 4? How does John emphasise their significance?

Look up Ezekiel 37:15–28. How does this prophecy throw light on chapter 4?

How does the second sign summarise the main points on which John has been focusing since 2:1?

In chapter 4 what are the chief lessons for:  
 the disciples?

us?



## Group Preparation Questions

**Study Tip: Thinking about structure** It is important not to think of the Gospels as scrapbooks, random collections of memories about Jesus' life and teaching. All the Gospel writers deliberately structured their accounts in order to aid our understanding. With any passage, therefore, it is a useful exercise to do the following:

- Divide the passage into its natural sections.
- Give each section a title.
- Think how the sections fit together to make the main point.

For Discussion: Week 7, October 31, 2018

R e a d   M a r k   L e a r n   S t u d y        7

## John 6:1–40 He came to His own (2)

Prep . questions

☒ What themes from earlier chapters do we see in this passage?

☒ Identify the Jews' motives and their attitudes to Jesus throughout the passage.

☒ How do Jesus' words in verses 35–40 relate to the earlier parts of the chapter?

☒ What warnings and encouragements do we find in this passage?

John 6:41–71 He came to His own (3)

Prep . questions

☒ What is the immediate context of this discussion between Jesus and the Jews?

☒ What new explanation about the 'bread from heaven' do we learn from this passage? How is this related to the forthcoming Passover feast? (See Exod. 12:1–30.)

☒ Jesus describes, in different ways, how someone may have eternal life? What are these descriptions, and how are they related?

☒ What is the shock of verses 60–71? What else do we learn from these verses?

☒ What does this passage teach us about genuine discipleship?

For Discussion: Week 9, November 14, 2018

R e a d M a r k L e a r n S t u d y 9

John 7:1–52 His own did not receive Him

Prep . questions

List the different reactions to Jesus to be found in chapter 7.

How are Jesus' words in verse 7 demonstrated in verses 11–31?

What do we learn about Jesus' mission in this chapter?

How should this passage inform our evangelism?

## Group Preparation Questions

**Study Tip: Look for the main point** It is important, when studying a passage, to look for the author's main point (or points). As John writes he includes specific lessons he wants us to pick up, and we should be alert to recognise them. Although passages may contain much detail, we should remember that the details will be used to teach the main point. If we leave a study having looked only at details, we will have missed that main point and so missed the main purpose of studying the passage.



For Discussion: Week 10, November 28, 2018

R e a d M a r k L e a r n S t u d y 1 0

## John 8:12-59 Children born of natural descent

(Vv. 1-11 are left out because they were almost certainly not part of John's original Gospel. See the note in the NIV version.)

Prep . questions

☒ What themes from earlier chapters are seen again in verses 12-30?

☒ How might verse 31 affect the way we read the rest of the chapter?

☒ List the distinctive characteristics of the two families that Jesus describes in verses 31-59.

☒ In what ways does Jesus shock the Jews in verses 31-59? How do these things challenge us?

John 9:1-41 Born of God &  
John 10:1-42 The Good Shepherd

Prep . questions

Contrast the attitudes of the man born blind and the Jews after the miracle.

How does John intend us to understand the chapter in view of these verses:  
 verse 3?

verse 39?

How should this chapter affect  
 our evangelism?

our attitude to our own salvation?

### Study Tip: Application is vital

The result of any Bible study should be a change in our lives. God gives us many warnings about the folly and danger of not doing what His word says, e.g. Matthew 7:26–27, James 1: 22–24.

- ☒ Don't let any personal or group study time go by without allowing time to consider the implications, and the application, of the passage. (We need to help one another with this.)
- ☒ Come to the study having put time into the prep. questions on application. Don't be satisfied with the first thought that comes to mind.
- ☒ After the group study spend time on your own, thinking through how the passage should affect you personally.



For Discussion: Week 12, January 16, 2019

R e a d M a r k L e a r n S t u d y 1 3

John 11:1-54 'I am the resurrection and the life' &  
John 11:55-12:50 Death in this world – life in  
eternity

Prep . questions

☒ What pointers are we given to help us understand the raising of Lazarus?

☒ What can we learn from Jesus' reaction to Lazarus and the mourners?

☒ From what we have seen in John so far, explain the reaction of the Sanhedrin in verse 48.

☒ What significance is to be found in Caiaphas' comment and 'prophecy'?

☒ How can we effectively explain the truths of this passage to our friends and colleagues?

## Group Preparation Questions

**Study Tip: Studying narrative passages** Much of the Bible (and of John) is composed of narrative. If handled poorly, narrative passages can be a minefield because of the tendency to align ourselves with particular characters and decide to do what they do. On the other hand, there is so much for us to learn from these passages, especially about the character and actions of God, that we should resist the temptation to skip over them simply because they do not contain specific instruction.

- ☒ First, look to see if any explanation is provided in the surrounding passages.
- ☒ Learn to distinguish what is descriptive (telling us what happened) from what is prescriptive (giving instruction).
- ☒ Lessons *can* be learned from narrative passages, but we must understand them in their wider contexts. Often it is the 'big picture' that will show us if there is an example to follow or to avoid.
- ☒ Look for *principles* to apply, rather than actions to mirror.

For Discussion: Week 12, January 16, 2019

R e a d M a r k L e a r n S t u d y 1 4

John 11:55–12:50 Death in this world – life in  
eternity

Prep . questions

How does this passage divide up? Give each part a title.

Read Zechariah 9:9–13. How do these verses shed light on the significance of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem?

What do we learn about

the reasons for Jesus' death?

the achievements of His death?

From the whole passage, identify a right and a wrong response to Jesus. Where do we fall short? How should we change?

For Discussion: Week 13, January 23, 2019

Group Preparation Questions Study 15

John 13:1–30 The cross is central!

Prep . questions

What are the two main elements in this passage?

Bearing in mind the main lessons of 12:23–36, what indications are there that there is more to this incident than just washing feet?

In what ways does Peter misunderstand Jesus' teaching?

How should we understand Judas' betrayal of Jesus in the light of this passage?

Explain the place of the cross in your life. How does this passage challenge that view?





John 14:5–14 'How can we know? ... Show us!'

Prep . questions

☒ John 14.6 is very well-known. How do our studies in John's Gospel so far explain Jesus' answer to Thomas' question?

☒ How do verses 9–11 address Philip's request in verse 8?  
Summarise Jesus' answer.

☒ What are the 'greater things' that Jesus promises we will do? (NB 'greater works' is a better translation than 'greater things'.)

☒ What were the 'greater things' (same phrase) in 5:20?

☒ How are they linked to the Father's 'work' (v. 10)?

☒ What are the implications of this passage for

☒ the sincere Muslim/Jew/Hindu, etc.?

☒ the Christian who wants to know God better?

**Study Tip: The Bible is right!**

When faced with difficult verses or passages it is easy to treat the Bible as a confused ancient text and to think it's up to us to make the best of it. Remember that the Bible is God's perfect word, and that if we don't understand it, the problem is with us, rather than the text. Work at it and pray for understanding!

John 14:15-31 'Show us ...why us and not the world?'

Prep . questions

- The disciples are still troubled about Jesus leaving them (v. 27).What insight and reassurance does He give them about His departure
- in verses 15-21?

in verses 22-31?

- What is the role of the Spirit according to Jesus? Does this differ from contemporary teaching on His role? How?

- What do we learn from this passage about what it means to be a believer?

John 15:1–17 ‘I am the true vine’ &  
John 15:18–16:4 The disciples’ relationship with the world

Prep . questions

- How do the following Old Testament passages help us to see the significance of Jesus’ words in verse 1?  
 Isaiah 5:1–7 and Jeremiah 2:21

Isaiah 27:2–6

- What do we discover, in verses 3–8, about the consequences of remaining or not remaining in the true vine?

- What does it mean, to remain in Jesus, according to verses 9–17?

- How is our responsibility to ‘remain’ related to Jesus’ prior actions?

## John 15:18–16:4 The disciples' relationship with the world

### Prep . questions

What different reasons does Jesus give for the world hating (or persecuting) the disciples? What are the underlying motives?

What form of persecution are you most likely to face?

Bearing in mind this persecution, how should the disciples, and we, be helped by Jesus' teaching  
 in this passage?

in the Upper Room Discourse so far?

### Study Tip: Good application

The application of a passage is vital (see earlier tip in Study 11), but it is more than a matter of bolting on a plan of action (usually involving more prayer, evangelism, or Bible study). Keep these points in mind:

- ☒ The most significant application usually comes from the wider context. In John, this means that we must always keep 20:31 in our sights.
- ☒ Often, it is our thinking and attitudes that are wrong (with regard to God, ourselves and salvation) and these will only change over time. Right thinking will then lead to the right kind of action. (See James 3:13.)
- ☒ We naturally think individually, but the Bible is usually addressed to God's *people*. We need to help one another to live obediently. If you do make 'plans' at the end of a study, pray for God's help and discuss how you are getting on the following week.

## John 16:5–33 'I am going to the Father'

### Prep . questions

☒ What does Jesus tell us about the work of the Spirit? What have we heard before and what is new?

☒ How does this differ from common views (or our views) of the Spirit's work?

☒ What reasons does Jesus give, in verses 16–28, for the disciples' rejoicing? What privileges of the Christian life are described here?

☒ To what extent do we appreciate and take advantage of these privileges?



For Discussion: Week 17, February 20, 2019

R e a d M a r k L e a r n S t u d y 2 2

## John 17:1–26 Jesus prays for His disciples

Prep . questions

☒ What does Jesus specifically pray for in verses 1–5? How is this related to His words in verses 2–4?

☒ What do we learn about the disciples in verses 6–11? Why is this important, in view of verse 18?

☒ How is this related to Jesus' prayer for them?

☒ For what (specifically) does Jesus pray for all future believers, and why?

☒ What should we learn from Jesus' priorities in prayer?



**Study Tip: John 18 onwards...**

After all the *explanatory theology* of the Upper Room Discourse, we move back into the *unfolding narrative* (these are the two main elements of chapters 11–20). In the narrative, however, John gives us clues which indicate how we are to interpret events, in the light of the theology already given. So we must resist the temptation to speculate in our interpretation and instead be alert to pick up the words and phrases that John uses.

John 18:28–19:16 'I find no basis for a charge'  
...'Crucify Him!'

Prep . questions

Divide the action in this passage into scenes.

What does Jesus' trial teach us about

who He is and what He has come to do?

a right response to Him?

In what ways are the Jews themselves 'tried and found guilty' in this passage?

How, today, could we be found similarly guilty?

## John 19:17-42 'It is accomplished!'

### Prep . questions

This passage refers to several Old Testament passages. What is *the context* of each of the following verses?  
(First, read the two psalms and summarise each in a sentence.)

Psalm 22:18

Psalm 69:21

Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12

Zechariah 12:10 (NB 13:1)

Divide the passage into parts and give a title to each part.

## Group Preparation Questions

☒ What main point is John making, and how does each part of the passage tie in with it?

☒ What are the implications of this passage for the Christian?

### Study Tip: The Bible provides its own interpretation

Evangelical (Bible-believing) Christians are often accused of taking one particular interpretation and ignoring other possibilities. But the Bible does not simply relate events and then leave us to interpret those events for ourselves. Rather, it gives us both the events and their interpretation. The importance of understanding the biblical interpretation, rather than one that suits us, cannot be overstated and is a good reason to work hard at the text.

For Discussion: Week 21, March 27, 2019

R e a d   M a r k   L e a r n   S t u d y            2 6

## John 20:1-31 ' We have seen the Lord!'

Prep . questions

Look carefully through the passage and find all the evidence for the physical resurrection of Jesus.

What do we learn about the significance of Jesus' resurrection? What previous lessons from John's Gospel are confirmed here?

How should we react to this passage? How should we not? How do we?

## John 21:1-25 'Feed my sheep!'

### Prep . questions

The account of the miraculous catch of fish seems to have two functions. How is it related

to the previous chapter?

to Jesus' conversation with Peter?

What are Jesus' priorities for His people? How do chapters 13-17 help us to understand them more fully?

What part is to be played by

Peter?

John?

us?



### Prep . questions

By now, you will be familiar with John's purpose statement (20:31)

*... 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.*

What have you learned about

who Jesus is?

what it means to have life in His name?

How have you been encouraged to believe?

Having studied John's Gospel, what new reasons do you have to be thankful?