



That You May
HAVE LIFE

A STUDY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

women's
BIBLE STUDY



women's | BIBLE STUDY

LESSON *Three*

Whoever Believes

This section begins with Jesus cleansing the temple area from everyone selling goods within the walls. Then, Jesus spoke to a well-educated and religious man, Nicodemus, and told him the way to eternal life. It is not found by devotion to the law but through a new life, or rebirth, brought about by God alone. Jesus explained that God does this type of saving work solely because of love. Finally, the story focuses once again on John the Baptist, highlighting the disciple's support of the Savior, even in the face of opposition.

TEMPLE

The temple was the sacred place where Jews could worship God through the offering of sacrifices. It was to be kept holy just as God is holy.

PASSOVER

Passover is a Jewish feast celebrating God's miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. This story is found in Exodus 12-14.

Read John 2:12-3:36 before answering the following questions.

1. Note the times Jesus used the phrase "eternal life" in this section. How would you define eternal life? Now, from the following verses, compare how Scripture speaks about eternal life. (See Appendix: Eternal Life)

John 17:3

Romans 6:23

1 John 1:2, 5:11-13

Read John 2:12-25.

2. When Jesus enters the temple at the time of the Passover feast, what does He find and how does He react? Why? (See Psalm 69:9)

3. Rather than questioning if Jesus' actions were justified, the Jews questioned His authority. They wanted Jesus to validate His bold actions. How does Jesus respond?
4. The money changers in the temple demonstrated that the Israelites had become less than pure in their devotion to God. They had become distracted by comfort and convenience rather than putting God and His desires first. What are some examples of how you are tempted in the same way?

Read John 3:1-21.

5. Nicodemus, a prominent Pharisee, and Jesus engage in a conversation about the Kingdom of God. Use the prompts below to briefly explain Jesus' responses:

Nicodemus says Jesus is from God due to His signs.

Jesus' Response (Verse 3):

Nicodemus asks, "How can a man be born when he is old?"

Jesus' Response (Verses 5-8):

Nicodemus asks, "How can these things be?"

Jesus' Response (Verses 10-15):

OXEN, SHEEP, AND PIGEONS?

Selling animals within the temple walls was a matter of convenience for traveling worshipers. They would have been purchased on site and immediately sacrificed. However, it was against God's instructions and therefore was dishonoring.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

"Instead of solemn dignity and the murmur of prayer, there is the bel-lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep. Instead of brokenness and con-trition, holy adoration and pro-longed petition, there is noisy commerce."¹²

TRULY TRULY

The phrase translated "truly truly" in ESV or "verily verily" in other translations simply means, "I will tell you the truth." Jesus uses the phrase "to confirm and emphasize its trust-worthiness and importance."¹³

VERSE 14

The Old Testament story Jesus references in verse 14 can be found in Numbers 21:4-9. Read this story for better context on John 3.

THE WIND

Jesus draws a parallel between the wind and God's Spirit in verse 8. You cannot control the Spirit, just as you cannot control the wind, but the evidence of His presence is simply undeniable.

NOT BY WORKS

"Entry into the kingdom is not by way of human striving (John 1:13), but by that re-birth which only God can effect."¹⁵

CONDEMN

To condemn means to "pronounce guilty, to sentence to punishment." However, be encouraged. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

6. Jesus was making the point that no human can work hard enough or be good enough to be accepted into God's Kingdom. Rather, they must be entirely made new by God. It is not by human strength, but divine power. How are you tempted to strive to be accepted by God? If you are a believer, how have you been "made new" by God? (See Appendix: Regeneration)

"The entire hope of fallen humanity rests on this one thing—that there is a Savior who is eternally steadfast in redeeming, forgiving, reconciling, transforming, and delivering love."

— Paul David Tripp¹⁴

7. John 3:16 is one of the clearest presentations of the gospel, or good news of God, in all of Scripture. Record some observations about this verse. (For an explanation of a Bible observation, turn to page 6.)

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What does this verse imply about those who do not believe in Jesus? How does this make you feel?

8. Verse 17 says, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Do you ever feel condemned, by God or others around you, because of your sin? Explain. Since Jesus did not come to condemn, who or what is it that condemns you? (See also verse 18)

Now, meditate on verse 17 for a couple of minutes. Let the words sink in until you truly feel the freedom and peace Christ offers you!

9. The salvation of mankind through Jesus is rooted in God's love. Now that you have spent some time in the previous question thinking about your sin, read the following verses about God's perfect love. Underline anything that stands out to you:

*“But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
(Romans 5:8)*

*“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
(Romans 8:37-39)*

*“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”
(Ephesians 2:4-7)*

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” (1 John 3:1)

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:7-11)

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Psalm 119:11 refers to knowing God's Word in your heart so you might not sin against Him. A great first verse of Scripture to memorize is John 3:16. If you have already committed this to memory, try adding on verse 17.

SALVATION?

To learn more about salvation, read Romans 10:9-10 and Ephesians 2:8-10. All that is needed for eternal life is belief in Jesus.

“If there is one sentence more than another which sums up the message of the Fourth Gospel, it is this. The love of God is limitless; it embraces all mankind. No sacrifice was too great to bring its unmeasured intensity home to men and women; the best that God had to give, he gave—his only Son, his well-beloved...The gospel of salvation and life has its source in the love of God.”

— *F. F. Bruce*¹⁶

10. God’s love for you is active, never failing, and never ceasing. He demonstrated it in the sacrifice of Jesus. No matter your past, no matter where you are currently struggling, and no matter your future, God’s love for you stays the same. When do you most struggle to believe that you are loved by God? What steps can you take to remind yourself of God’s love every single day?

Read John 3:22-36.

11. John the Baptist knew God had a specific plan for his ministry. He was not jealous of Jesus’ ministry, even claiming, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” According to this passage, why was John the Baptist able to say his joy was complete?
12. Verse 36 unpacks two distinct choices. Explain them both. Which choice have you made and where will it lead?

PURIFICATION

Purification was a ceremonial washing for Jews instructed in the Old Testament. It is possible that John’s baptism was confusing to the Jewish people.

PRESENT TENSE

John 3:36 is written in the present tense. Eternal life does not just start after death but begins as soon as one believes in Jesus as their Savior.

13. Take some time to reflect on the truth of the gospel: God sent Jesus to die on your behalf so that you could truly live. How has this truth changed your life? How will you respond to this truth in faith this week? Write a prayer below thanking God for anything that comes to mind after reflecting. (See Appendix: Grace)

Read Carla's story on the next page about the abundant life God offers.

BIG IDEA

What is your biggest takeaway from this week's lesson?

Testimony

“How do you even know what to do, and when?” My fiancée asked me louder than necessary as we walked past the stained-glass windows exiting my church. “Do you really believe this stuff?” he yelled. I was annoyed. Who was he to ask me this? He didn’t even believe God existed. I, on the other hand, had been baptized as a baby in this church and my family knew everyone here. If the priest was actually going to agree to marry us, my fiancée better keep his voice down and his questions to a minimum.

That night I sat confused. Why on earth couldn’t I answer his questions? Why was I so frustrated? I suddenly realized I had never really questioned the validity of my faith. Not once. Not ever. I attended church every Sunday and learned all the right Bible stories. I followed the rules, the rituals, and traditions and I knew the service order down cold. I even got on my knees and prayed! These religious practices set me apart and my good works definitely outweighed my bad ones. God knew that, right? Wasn’t I doing enough to get to heaven? Wasn’t the scale weighed in my direction?

Several months down the road, my now husband began genuinely exploring his faith. A friend of mine suggested that we try out a different church so he could find some answers to his questions. We found a non-denominational church outside of Chicago and I hoped for the best. Maybe I would get my questions answered too. The problem was the guilt I was carrying around. Wasn’t it wrong, or sinful even, to go to another church? How upset would my family be if they really knew?

Like Nicodemus, I had an affinity for ritual and laws. It was comfortable. It was all I knew. However, beyond the basic knowledge of those children’s Bible stories, I had nothing. No true faith. No real understanding of God. There was no way I could answer any Bible questions because frankly I hadn’t read enough of God’s Word. Most importantly, though I was a good person I didn’t have a relationship with God. But that was about to change.

My new church had lots of people who actually seemed different because of their faith. The women in my Bible study had a certain joy and peace that I couldn’t quite put my finger on. We read the Gospel of John, and they gave me space to ask a lot of questions. Often we would have unhurried conversations with other professional women like myself. It became a place I felt safe, just like Nicodemus

found with Jesus. No one seemed bothered by my lack of knowledge, instead everyone seemed more than willing to help.

While I believed in God and Jesus, I really struggled with the concepts of salvation and the role of the Holy Spirit. It wasn’t long before I was asking:

“How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’” (John 3:4-5)

From John and other women, I learned that there had to be a spiritual washing, a cleansing of sin. There had to be forgiveness from God. This was only accomplished by stepping out in faith and believing that salvation is found by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Unlike what I understood growing up, no good works or achievements could earn my way to heaven, my sin was simply too great. This changed things. I knew I was a sinner, but I didn’t know I could be forgiven without the rituals and works taught by my previous church. I didn’t understand grace. Could it really be that easy? No middleman, but just me and Jesus?

Grace, Jesus dying for me when I really just deserved judgment and wrath, had a whole new meaning. I prayed. I confessed. And I believed. The scales fell off, and the freedom from fear of rules overwhelmed me.

“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:7-8)

The Holy Spirit now dwelled in me, and He moved me greatly. Where the Spirit works, there is undeniable and unmistakable evidence. I too was “born again.” I too was saved by grace. Later on, I even had the chance to be baptized in my church as an adult. Friends of mine, many from that Bible study, gathered around to celebrate. Finally, I could answer questions of the faith. Finally, I could say I truly believed. And more than that, belief brought new life, not only for me, but also for my former atheist spouse. Jesus changed everything for us, and He can do it for you too. All you have to do is believe.

– Carla

Notes