

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the New Testament
Living the Message 2021-2022
December 2021 Study Guide for Participants and Facilitators

December Question: “What About John? *John, the Maverick Gospel*”

[Click here to watch the video.](#)

Focus Statement and Summary

The “Fourth Gospel” is so markedly different from the three “synoptic” Gospels that it almost didn’t make it into the New Testament and has puzzled readers ever since. But for those who persevere, it’s a marvelously symbolic, theologically rich, and beautifully written story of Jesus. Historically, it’s conditioned by the needs of an early Christian community made up largely of Jewish Christians who were likely expelled from their local synagogue during a time of turbulence and struggle that occurred in first-century Judaism after the destruction of the Temple. Literarily, it is structured into two main sections – the “Book of Signs” and the “Book of Glory” (or “Exultation”) with an introduction and a conclusion. At the heart of the Gospel is the intent to retell the history of Israel – with a particular focus on the primary stories in Genesis and Exodus – in order to reassure this early and struggling Christian community that Jesus is the Messiah, the one in whom we have experienced “grace upon grace,” who reveals God’s essential loving character, and who is strong enough to defeat death and thereby offers new life to all who believe in him.

Initial Question (before watching the presentation)

When you think of the Gospel According to John, are there particular verses or stories that come to mind? What makes them memorable?

Further Questions (after watching the presentation):

1. What is one new insight about John that will help you in your Christian faith?
2. As we’ve explored, John is very different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. What is the main contribution that John makes to the New Testament witness about Jesus and to your faith? What questions do you still have?
3. Of the passages we looked at – ch 1:1-18, ch 2, ch 9, portions of ch. 19 – which helped you understand John and his community best? Which passages help you understand what John has to offer our church today?

Key Passages

[John 1:1-8](#) Often called “the Prologue” – The New Genesis

[John 2](#) Jesus’ First Sign (Wedding at Cana) and Cleansing the Temple – Grace upon Grace

[John 9](#) The Healing of the Man Born Blind – The Struggles of John’s Community

[John 19](#) The Crucifixion of Jesus – The (Strangely) Victorious Messiah

[John 20](#) The Resurrection – A New Creation

Going Deeper into the Word with Pastor Ruud

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life (John 3:16).

1. Many people in certain strains of Christianity speak of themselves as being “born again.” Hearing from Pastor Ruud how the Greek language of John’s Gospel is perhaps purposefully ambiguous and contains multiple meanings and definitions (*born again, anew, and/or from above*), how does it influence your own understanding of describing faith in Christ?
2. John’s gospel is full of symbolic flourish. In chapter 3, Nicodemus visits Jesus by night (3:2), but we learn that Nic is also *in the dark*, so-to-speak, in his understanding and trust in Jesus as God’s messiah. Do you ever feel or find yourself to be “in the dark”? What’s it like? Given the symbolism of the Gospel, what does it mean then to hear Jesus is the “light of the world” (8:12), and then to hear “the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it”? (1:5) What does it mean for us if we’re in the dark?

Closing Prayer

Dear God, as we read the testimony of John, let us be renewed in our faith that you come to us always in love to bless, renew, and restore all creation. Amen.