

# GOSPEL OF JOHN OVERVIEW

## JOHN'S MAIN THING



## TEACH IT COFFEEHOUSE SESSION 1

### ONE WEEK OUT

You may want to send out reminder notes to those who will be studying with you. Let them know the date, time, and place (include the address and directions if necessary) of the first session, and encourage them to be a part of every session. Remind them to bring some food and tip money (unless you're buying!). You may also want to challenge them to read the first few chapters of John on their own, just to get a feel for it. (The students will be able to read each chapter in 15 minutes or less.)

As you prepare for the first session, remember to allow time for reproducing Scripture sheets and journal pages and for gathering the materials needed (see the Materials step below).

Most importantly, recruit a prayer team to pray specifically for this Bible study. Supply the team with helpful specifics, such as names of students, when you're meeting, and the subject matter you're covering.

### 1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- his or her own Bible
- optional: the student journal page for Session 1 (Using the student journal page is optional in the coffeehouse setting since table space will be limited.)

You'll also need—

- a pack of pencils with erasers
- optional: a few spare Bibles for students who've forgotten theirs

### 2. Session Intro

#### GOALS OF SESSION 1

As students experience this session, they will—

- discover John's purpose in writing his Gospel.
- be introduced to the connection between *true belief* and a changed life.
- be challenged to become a "sign" that will point others to belief in Jesus.

#### PRAYER

After your students have gathered, congratulate them on deciding to be a part of this study. Share that whenever you set out to dig deeper into God's Word, you can expect to grow closer to God. But you can also expect the enemy to try to knock you off course. Spend some time praying with the group, that students will stand firm in the Lord's will throughout this study and experience personal change through the power of his Word.

## OPEN

### Book Background

Begin the session by asking a few students to share about a favorite book they've read. Use these points as a guide. Have them—

- describe when they read it and why they liked it so much.
- explain the purpose of the book. (Why did the author write it?)
- make a connection between the author's purpose and why the book was meaningful to them.
- share with the rest of the group any ways (big or little) the book changed them.

Transition by saying something like this:

**The Bible is made up of a lot of books, 66 total. Each book has a specific purpose behind it and makes a unique contribution to the big picture of God. The Gospel of John, which we're going to spend some time with for the next few weeks, is one of these books.**

Lead your group in a brainstorm discussion about the Gospel of John. Use these questions to get things rolling:

**What do you know about John's Gospel?**

**What makes this Gospel unique from the other three?**

**What are some reasons we should study this book?**

Let the discussion be free-flowing, but bring out a few of these points:

*-John wrote his Gospel within a hundred years of Jesus' ministry. Compared with all of history, this time span is about the equivalent of a live play-by-play!*

*-All of Jesus' exclusive "I am" statements (such as "I am the way and the truth and the life" in John 14:6) come from the Gospel of John. Apparently, John was encountering moral relativism in his culture (the belief that individuals or the culture can determine truth), much as we encounter it today.*

*-John actually walked with Jesus! His was an eyewitness account.*

You may also want to use this opportunity to point out the following info:

*-Of the Bible's 66 books, only four cover the life of Jesus. These books (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are called "Gospels."*

*-Matthew, Mark, and Luke include similar material and for the most part cover events in chronological order. The Gospel of John stands alone because it contains events and teachings not found in the other Gospels.*

## 3. Digging In

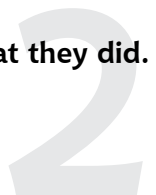
### Purpose Statement

Explain that the best way to understand a book of the Bible is to find out why the author wrote it. Why did God put this book in the Bible? Why did he move someone to write down these particular things for us today? Some authors of Bible books tell you right up front why they wrote them; others make you dig for it. John just lays it out there for us!

Ask students—

**1. Read the following passages from your Bibles.**

**2. Note who did what by lightly circling the "whos" in the passage and underlining what they did.**



**3. If you're hesitant to mark in your Bibles, write lightly so you can erase the markings later. If you're still not comfortable with it, that's okay. Just eyeball the passage and remember any info you see on who did what.**

After a few minutes, talk about who did what in each passage. If you're using the optional student journal pages, students can record the info in the chart under Digging In.

	<b>Who...</b>	<b>did what?</b>
John 2:22	<i>Disciples...</i>	<i>recalled what Jesus said, believed the Scripture and words of Jesus.</i>
John 4:39	<i>Many Samaritans...</i>	<i>believed in Jesus.</i>
John 9:35-38	<i>A man thrown out...</i>	<i>believed in Jesus and worshiped him.</i>
John 11:23-27	<i>Martha...</i>	<i>believed Jesus to be the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God.</i>

Then ask if anyone saw something these passages have in common. Focus the discussion on the common action of believing.

Now call your students' attention to John 20:30-31 in their Bibles (if you're using the optional student journal pages, this passage is printed on the pages). Have them find and mark the following:

**1. Circle the reason why "these" things are written.**

*These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ (v. 31).*

**2. Underline to whom "these" things are written.**

*They are written to John's readers, "you" (v. 31).*

**3. Draw a box around what John wants us to believe.**

*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (v. 31).*

**4. Draw fireworks  around what happens when we believe.**

*We have life in his name (v. 31).*

After discussing what the students found and marked, ask a few questions:

**Going by this verse and the others we've looked at, what seems to be a key word in John's Gospel?**

*The key word seems to be "believe".*

**Who is the "you" referring to in John 20:31?**

*"You" refers to readers of this book, then and now (i.e., us!).*

**What's John's main thing?**

*Elicit these points:*

*-John believed that by reading about Jesus—by experiencing what he did and said—people would put their belief in him.*

*-John believed that this belief would give people life in Jesus' name.*

*-We're going to see how this works as we study this Gospel.*

## 4. Digging Deeper

### True Belief

Share with your students the Insight from Prep It regarding the Greek word for *believe*. Point out the connection between true belief and a person's behavior. You may want to illustrate this connection through the following questions:

**How do we demonstrate our belief in aerodynamics?**

*We fly in an airplane.*

**How do we demonstrate our belief in a substance such as rubber?**

*We bungee jump or ride in a car (rubber tires).*

**How do we demonstrate our belief that exercise will keep us healthy?**

*We play sports.*


**How do we demonstrate that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah? What do you do on a daily basis that is a direct result of your belief in Jesus?**

*It might be easy for students to give a simple answer to this question, such as "go to church." Hover on this question and press students to get beyond obvious answers. Help them process how belief in Jesus as the Son of God can impact every aspect of their lives—how it should affect things such as their reactions to challenges, their decision-making, their interactions with people, their frustrations, their temptations.*


Say something like—

**If believing in Jesus hasn't changed our behavior somehow, how would anybody actually know we believe? Now that we're armed with a little info about the word *believe*, let's dig deeper into the theme of John's Gospel.**

Ask students to read some words from Jesus, John 3:11-18, from their Bibles (if you're using the optional student journal page, this passage is printed on the page). As they read, ask them to find and mark the following with pencils if they're comfortable:

1. Draw a light bulb  over the word *believe* and any other forms of this word.

2. Mark any benefits of believing with a "smiley" face  .

3. Mark any consequences for not believing with a "frowny" face  .

After a few minutes, use these questions to prompt a discussion on the benefits and consequences of believing or not believing:

**Based on Jesus' words in John 3, what's the main benefit of believing?**

*The main benefit is salvation/eternal life (v. 16).*

**What's the main consequence of not believing?**

*The main consequence is condemnation/death (v. 18).*

**So what? Does the concept of eternal life mean anything to us right now?**

*Let this be an open-ended discussion on whether the prospect of living forever (spiritually, of course) is enough motivation to follow Jesus.*

## 5. Taking It Inward

*Eternal Life. So What?*

Put the following thoughts in your own words, asking your students to fill in the blank at the appropriate moment.

**Eternal life isn't something we can easily comprehend. In fact, sitting here in this coffeehouse, it seems a little unreal...and a long way off! So it may not be a great motivator right now. In fact, it may have been better if Jesus had said, "Whoever believes in me will get an endless supply of \_\_\_\_\_!" (You fill in the blank.)**

**But here's the deal. Eternal life is a real thing—and it may come sooner than we might expect it to.**

Encourage your students to weigh in on their current belief level in Jesus, asking—

**Assuming you believe in Jesus, do you think your belief in him has changed your life in any way?**

**Think about your interests (how you spend your time), and rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being "same-ol'-same-ol'" and 10 being "people can see Jesus through my lifestyle."**

*Encourage students to be honest and self-reflective. Point out that they don't have to share if they would prefer not to.*

**What difference has the presence of Jesus Christ made in your life? Does your lifestyle (outlook, personality, behavior) reflect the fact that you are personally connected to the Creator of the universe?**

**John wrote his Gospel so others would know "these signs" and believe in Jesus as the Christ. How can our lives be signs that help others believe in Jesus as the Christ?**

**Go around the group completing this sentence: "Because I believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, I will \_\_\_\_\_."**

## 6. Wrapping It Up

*Bumper-Sticker Theology*

Close the time by asking the group to come up with a bumper-sticker phrase or text message that summarizes this session. If you need to prime the pump, suggest one or two of these:

**Do the Truth!**

**DR 2 BLV!**

**Belief Is Relief!**

**Be the Truth!**

**Believing Is Doing!**

When they've agreed on a phrase, ask them to write it down on a napkin or coffee sleeve—and then commit to re-creating it in such a way that they'll see it several times a day. (They may want to create a text message or make a digital image for their phone or iPod.)

Close by praying for the belief level of your students—that their belief in Jesus as the Christ will affect their lifestyle every day. (And if you're meeting in a coffeehouse, one way you can live out your belief in Jesus is to leave a nice tip.)