

# GOSPEL OF JOHN OVERVIEW

## JOHN'S MAIN THING



## TEACH IT MIDDLE SCHOOL SESSION 1

### ONE WEEK OUT

You may want to send out reminder notes to the students who will be in your group. Let them know the date and time of the first session, and encourage them to be a part of every session.

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—

- the Session 1 Scripture sheet
- the student journal page for Session 1
- a three-ring notebook in which to keep his or her Scripture sheets and journal pages over the course of the study
- his or her own Bible and a pen

You'll also need—

- a pack of colored pencils (at least two colors per student)
- a wall-size Scripture sheet of John 20:30-31 (data projection onto paper or poster board, a giant print-out from Kinko's, or a handmade poster)
- colored large-tip markers or Sharpie pens
- a favorite book (one you read recently or as a teenager; it doesn't have to be a Christian book)
- optional: marshmallows

### 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 students to share about a favorite book of theirs. Then share about your favorite book, using these points as a guide:

- Show students your book and ask if any are familiar with it.
- Describe when you read it and why you 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 you.
- If the book changed you somehow (big or little), share that change with your students.

Transition by saying something like this:

**The Bible is made up of a lot of books, 66 total. Each book has a specific purpose 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? (By the way, a "Gospel" is a Bible book that covers the life and teachings of Jesus.)**

**Why do you think we should study a book of the Bible?**

**Why do you think we should study a book that covers the life and teachings of Jesus?**

*Play "devil's advocate" a bit and ask why this is better than meeting to play games, eat pizza, and discuss the issues of the day, such as peer pressure.*

Let the discussion be free-flowing, but share 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, in John's culture, truth was up for grabs, much as it is today.*

*-John actually walked with Jesus! He saw firsthand what he wrote about.*

*You could use this opportunity to point out the following info:*

*-Of the Bible's 66 books, only four cover the life of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.*

*-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.*

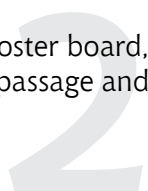
## 3. Digging In

### Purpose Statement

Explain to your group that the best way to get a handle on 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 put it in someone's head to write down these 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!

Tell the group that John tells us why he wrote this book in John 20:30-31.

Call your students' attention to the wall-size version of John 20:30-31 (data projection onto paper or poster board, a giant printout from Kinko's, or a handmade poster). Ask for volunteers, one at a time, to come to the passage and



mark the following items using large-tip markers (and have the rest of the group mark these items on their journal pages using their colored pencils):

**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).*

Then discuss—

**Going by this verse and a certain word you see repeated in it, what seems to be the key word in the Gospel of John?**

*The key word seems to be “believe”.*

**Who is the “you” in John 20:31?**

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

**Going by this verse, what was John’s main thing?**

*Draw out conclusions that reflect these points:*

- John believed that by reading about Jesus, people would believe in him.*
- John believed that this belief would give people life in Jesus’ name.*

Invite students to turn to John 20:31 in their Bibles. If they’re comfortable marking in their Bibles, ask them to underline this verse and indicate that it’s John’s “main thing,” or purpose statement. They may even want to copy the markings of your poster onto this verse in their Bibles.

## 4. Digging Deeper

*True Belief*

Share with the group 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 airplanes.*

**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 or participate in gym class.*

**How do we demonstrate our belief 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.” 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.*

Say something like—

**If believing in Jesus hasn’t changed your behavior all that much, how would anybody know that you actually believe? Now that we’re armed with a little information about the word *believe*, let’s dig deeper into the theme of John’s Gospel.**

Read Jesus’ words in John 3:14-18 (see below) interactively with your students. As you read, emphasize the word *believe* by asking students to react to it in a creative way whenever they hear it, such as:

- a five-second marshmallow fight (clean up after the session)
- applause or three quick claps
- a silly group cheer such as, “You da Word!”

**“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”**

Read the passage interactively a second time. Ask students to indicate a benefit by giving a thumbs-up (or cheering) and a consequence of not believing with a thumbs-down (or booing). If you need to, you can split this into two reading passes, reacting to consequences on a third read.

After you’ve read Jesus’ words, use these questions to discuss the benefits and consequences connected to believing or not believing:

**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 you right now?**

*Let this be an open-ended discussion on whether or not the prospect of living forever (spiritually, of course) is actually enough motivation to follow Jesus.*

## 5. Taking It Inward



*Eternal Life. So What?*

For this next exercise, ask your students to move to places of solitude in the room. Before they disperse, explain—

1. Find places of solitude where you can have a mini-retreat with God. You’re going to spend some time praying and meditating on the things we’ve just uncovered in Scripture.
2. You’ll need your journal pages and pens.
3. Once you’re alone with God, prayerfully respond to the Taking It Inward exercise on your journal pages.

Encourage students to be honest with themselves in the exercise. Point out that they won't have to share with the rest of the group if they don't want to.

## 6. Wrapping It Up

### *Bumper-Sticker Theology*

After several minutes, call the group back together. Ask volunteers to share any convictions or challenging thoughts from their solitude time. (You may want to draw their attention to the "big time" questions.)

After some have shared, ask the group to come up with a bumper-sticker phrase that summarizes this session. If you need to prime the pump, give them one or two of these suggestions:

**Do the Truth!**

**DR 2 BLV!**

**Belief Is Relief!**

**Be the Truth!**

**Believing Is Doing!**

When they've agreed on a statement, ask them to write it on their journal pages—and then commit to re-creating it in such a way that they'll see it several times a day. (They may want to make a sign for their lockers or a digital image for their phone or iPod.) If you have a computer printer handy, you can print the phrase onto labels for students to stick to something they'll take home.

Close by praying with your students for their different levels of belief—that their belief in Jesus as the Christ will affect their lifestyle every day. When your session is finished, have students put their journal pages and Scripture sheets in their notebooks. It might be helpful for you to keep them for your students from week to week.