

# GOSPEL OF JOHN OVERVIEW

## JOHN'S MAIN THING



## TEACH IT TALK SESSION 1

This talk guide is just that: a guide. It's not intended to be a manuscript to read aloud. It's here to give you ideas, structure, and stories to blend with "eureka" moments from your personal study (Prep It) as you prepare your talk.

The content complements the other Teach It guides, allowing you to give a talk on the same topic students are studying in other settings (such as small groups) without too much overlap.

### 1. Materials (Optional)

- Movie Clip: *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Scene: Indiana Jones is to "step out" in faith across a huge chasm (Chapter 33—counter cues, 1:47:00 to 1:49:00).
- Images from a Web search of "The Great Blondin"
- Play-Doh (or something else crafty like pipe cleaners) for an impromptu art creation during the talk

### 2. Optional Openings

Choose an opener appropriate for your group from one of the following options.

#### MOVIE CLIP

Say to your students—

**How many of you have seen all of the Indiana Jones movies? These movies certainly rank as one of the best movie series of all time. Action, adventure, snakes—what's not to love? One of the most memorable scenes out of all these movies is near the end of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Watch this clip and see what stands out to you.**

Show the Indiana Jones clip where he is required to "step out" in faith and cross a seemingly gigantic void in the earth (see the counter cues in Materials).

#### STORY

Optional: Project Web images of The Great Blondin over Niagara Falls during this story:

**On June 30, 1859, at 5 p.m., a tightrope walker named "The Great Blondin" made his first journey across the Niagara Falls. In fact, he walked across the falls so many times that he started doing crazy stunts on the wire, just to keep himself entertained. He walked across covered in heavy blankets. He walked across pushing a stove and cooking an egg. He did so many stunts over the falls that eventually the crowd had great belief in his ability to go forward, backward, or any which way he wanted across that high wire.**

**Once The Great Blondin shouted to the crowd, "How many of you believe that I could even carry a man across the falls?" Every hand went up. They knew he could do it. He was The Great Blondin! Then Blondin pointed into the crowd and said, "You, sir, climb on my back!"**

**So the question is: Would you climb onto his back and ride over a wire across the Niagara Falls? That's acting on your belief.**

## VISUAL/INTERACTIVE

Ask your students—

How many of you believe that when I flip on this light switch, it will work? You believe because you have faith. You believe because you have probably at one point flipped this very switch. You have some experience with switches. You might not understand exactly the mechanics of a light switch and how it makes a light go on, but you still believe the light will work.

But suppose you're from a primitive culture that has never heard of lights or electricity. I explain electricity to you as best I can, and then I tell you that if you flip that switch, light will come on in this room. Then if you flip the switch, an action that may seem absurd to you and will cause you to look silly if nothing happens, you are acting on belief.

## PERSONAL STORY

Tell a story of a risk you took, e.g., asking someone for a date, saying yes when asked to go on a date, sending a love letter, or buying a car or a house. Give a little insight into why that risk was worth it to you. Share about others who had taken the same risk before you, possibly with not-so-great results. Here's an example:

I'll never forget the first love letter I ever sent. It was to a girl named Donna. We were in the third grade. It was your classic "yes" or "no" check-box letter. No gray areas or special-friend categories. I wrote it out the night before school and gave it to her the next morning. Conveniently, her desk was right behind mine. Just before I gave it to her, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the thought, *what if she says no?* When I was boldly writing the note in the comfort of my own room, this option didn't even enter my mind. But then, as I thought about it, I would be destroyed if that happened. This girl I had a crush on might never talk to me again. Was it worth it? Deciding, "Yes, it's worth it," I will never forget the moment of getting up the courage to finally turn around, lay the note on her desk, and then calmly (on the outside) turn back to my desk as if I had simply given her an eraser.

The rest of the morning was agony as I waited for the response. I didn't hear a word our teacher said. That might be why I'm not good at math to this very day. Later in the lunch line, Donna came up to me. *Oh man. What's it going to be?* She said, "I got your note." Yes? Yes? She went on, "I didn't know whether to rip it up, or take it home and put it under my pillow." *Do what?* I guess I should have given her a gray area.

I was confused. But before lunchtime was over, she said yes, and we "went out" that third-grade year. We even successfully navigated the hardest move in the grade-school book—making the jump over the summer into the next grade! We had a lot of fun, and I even learned a bit about relationships.

Tell your students—

Some people say that "faith" is spelled R-I-S-K. Of course, those people are very bad spellers. But there's some truth to the fact that living out faith is always going to feel a little risky. For us control freaks, there's something unsettling about letting something or someone else be in charge. That's one of the incredibly exciting, exhilarating, life-altering things about faith.

John 1:10-13 says:

He [Jesus] was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right



**to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.**

### **PERSONAL STORY**

Tell a story of when you struggled to understand even the most basic thing your parents explained to you as a child.

Share your own struggle with understanding things growing up. Here’s an example:

**At the age of five, I couldn’t understand why I wasn’t allowed to mow the lawn. It looked so fun, and as much as I don’t like it now, I desperately wanted to “help” my parents by cutting the grass. I just didn’t have it in me to understand what could possibly go wrong with a five-year-old using a gas-powered machine with a sharp, spinning blade.**

Continue with—

**I know a lot of people who believe in parts of the Bible. The thing is, they tend to pick and choose the things they like or agree with. They’re not necessarily following the words of God so much as just liking the fact that what they believe happens to agree with the Bible in some places. There’s a world of difference between submitting to something you don’t totally understand and even disagree with—versus following something or someone when they happen to say things you like to hear.**

**The first situation is belief—belief that someone has your best interest in mind, that this someone loves you and would only encourage you and point you toward things that will benefit you or help you grow.**

**The other is you living your life by your rules. There’s a world of difference between belief in God and his Word, and belief in your “gut.”**

**Let’s try to think of it from God’s perspective.**

### **OPTIONAL ILLUSTRATION**

Invite three or four students to come to the front. Give each one a can of Play-Doh (or something else crafty like pipe cleaners), and ask them to create a two-minute work of art. It can be abstract, concrete—whatever they choose.

After two minutes, ask for a 30-second explanation. After each student has explained his or her creation, smash the creations while the crowd watches—and be prepared for a revolt! Then talk about why the crowd groaned or reacted when you destroyed the students’ art. (You’ll want to give a secret heads-up to the kids who make the art, but you knew that already.)

### **OPTIONAL MIX-INS**

You may want to point out a few facts about John’s Gospel:

*-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 (the belief that individuals or the culture can determine truth) in his day, much as we encounter it today.*

*-John actually walked with Jesus. He was a firsthand eyewitness!*

*-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 roughly the same 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.*

Continue with—

There's something that comes along with creation. It's a sense of accomplishment, of pride in a job well done. Many of us get pretty sensitive when our work is "judged" or messed with—or as in this case, destroyed. If you created something you really liked and someone else destroyed it, you'd get pretty frustrated. It's the most natural thing in the world.

Imagine what it must be like to create the world and everything in it, only to be ignored.

#### 4. Taking It Inward

Continue with—

Jeremiah 2:13 says, "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."

We all struggle with going after things that might look good on the surface, but compared to the God of the universe, they leak...they're lacking. God really is the spring of life—fresh water that bubbles up in our lives. But sadly, we spend much of our time pursuing "stale" stuff (popularity, money, grades, sports, relationships). These can be good things, but they all fall short of a real relationship with God.

There probably isn't a bigger "yet" in the Bible than in John 1:12-13: "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

Yet. Despite our lack of focus much of the time, God still gives us the chance to receive him and to believe in him. He even goes beyond that. He gives us the right to call him "Dad"!

John told us why he wrote his book in John 20:31: "But 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."

**Key word: believe.** The Greek language of John's day had only one word for *believe*: *pisteúō* (as opposed to the English language, which has several words for *believe*, such as *feel*, *think*, and *know*). When the Greeks used the word *pisteúō*, it meant to believe with everything in you—to the point where it actually changed your behavior. It meant not only to have faith, but also to act on faith.

We show this kind of belief whenever we fly in a plane or ride in a boat (or, if you used the optional story, climb on the back of a great tightrope walker). We can't see the force that's holding us up, but we believe in aerodynamics or the principles of buoyancy to the point where we'll actually trust our lives to those properties.

The choice is yours. What will you believe in? What or who will you follow for the rest of your life? What behavior needs to change to show that you believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God?

It can start now.

#### OPTIONAL MIX-IN

You may want to point out this fact about John's Gospel:

*John uses a form of the word believe (believing, belief, believed, and so on) 75 times in his Gospel. Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined only use the word 34 times. Can you see why believing in Jesus might be the main point John was working to get across?*