



Personal Bible Study Program 2006

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16

This year on Sundays, we will be studying sections of the books of John and Daniel as well as the whole of Colossians. In between these books there will be talks leading up to and including the mission as well as talks on 'Why God became a man', at the end of the year.

To help you get the most out of bible talks on Sunday we have designed a daily bible reading program that will help you to read and apply each bible passage during the week before the bible talk. This can be a supplement to your existing bible reading program if you already have one.

We hope that you will make the most of this Bible reading program by setting aside the time to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly".

How to use the readings:

- Print the studies out double-sided and staple the pages as a booklet
- Set aside time
- Pray for understanding
- Read the passage
- Answer the questions
- Meditate on what you learn
- Apply what you learn
- Pray in response

This Bible reading guide is available for download from the 'Resources' page at www.bpc.org.au

Introduction to John's Gospel

Towards the end of his gospel, John presents us with his purpose of writing:

³⁰Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹But 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.

John 20:30, 31

Everything John writes drives towards this purpose – to convince his readers of the right identity of Jesus as well as the right response to him.

As you read each passage, keep thinking about these questions:

- How does this passage help me to believe that Jesus is the Christ?
- How do I rightly respond by believing in his name?

A helpful way to get into John's gospel is to read it right through and get a feel of the structure and themes of John's gospel. One of the most helpful ways to understand the structure of John is to look out for the 'signs'. These 'signs' are the way that John structures his gospel. Each sign and its explanation teach something important about Jesus.

John's gospel draws heavily from the Old Testament as there is a strong Jewish background to this gospel. So to get the most out of John, it is worth doing a bit of digging into the OT. With each of the studies, there will be a section for you to dig into the OT to help you to understand the passage a bit better as well as to appreciate the OT.

Enjoy John's gospel and be blown away by what you learn of Jesus the Christ! But don't just learn about him, respond by believing in our glorious Christ.

NB: The gospel of John is full of riches. Some of these riches will occupy a lifetime of reflection. So don't be too worried if you can't find a simple answer to all of the bible study questions. They are written to help you to think.

Please note that we are open to feedback on how to improve this resource.
Please email your comments to office@bpc.org.au

**Day 1 (Read Jn 1:1-18, then focus on 1:1-5)**

1. What do you learn about God's "Word" in (1:1-5)?
2. What is the relationship of the Word to created life? (See Col 1:15,16; Heb 1:1-4)
3. How is opposition to the Word described and what reassurance is there of the triumph of the Word?

Day 2 (Read Jn 1:6-8, 15)

1. The passage refers to John (the Baptist). What is his role in relation to the Word?
2. John the Baptist joyfully accepted his role as the witness to Christ* (see Jn 3:27-30). Are you joyfully content to be a 'witness' to Christ?
3. Take a moment to remember who first 'testified' and 'witnessed' to you concerning Jesus. Thank God for them and their witness.

* the Christ (or Messiah) refers to God's anointed King as promised in the Old Testament.

Day 3 (Read Jn 1:14-18)

1. John anticipates two responses to the Word (see 1:9-11), what is shocking about the world's response?
2. What does it mean to "receive" him?
3. If you have "received him and believed in his name", take time to thank God for your status as a child of God. But if you are not sure if you are, ask God for help to believe that Jesus is the Christ as you dig deeper into the gospel of John.

Day 4 (Read Jn 1:14-18)

Read Exodus 22:12-23; 40:34-38.

1. With whose experience of God's glory is John comparing our experience of God's glory?
2. In what ways is our experience like theirs? In what ways is our experience better?
3. How does John emphasise the uniqueness of Jesus?

Day 5 (Read Jn 1:1-18)

1. Why is it that Jesus can make God known in a way no one else can?
2. Why is it that Jesus can give us a relationship with God in a way that no one else can?
3. Take time to thank God for revealing his glory so fully in the Word – Jesus Christ. As you read further in John, pray that he might give you a right understanding of Jesus.

**Day 1 (Read John 1:19-34)**

1. Who is John the Baptist? He gives a cryptic answer to those who have been sent to ask him, saying "...one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" (See Isaiah 40:3) What words can best be used to describe John the Baptist?
2. Why were the religious leaders so keen to know the 'identity' of John the Baptist? Do you think they were: a) jealous; b) afraid; c) excited; d).....?
3. John, the writer of this Gospel, inserts the detail about the exact geographic location of this encounter. Why does he do this?

Day 2 (John 1:19-28)

1. John was asked "What do you say about yourself?" How would you answer if you were asked that question? What part does Jesus play in your identity?
2. How clearly does John understand his own calling? Do you have the same clarity about God's calling for you?
3. John the Baptist was happy to be a 'curtain raiser' before the main show. Are you happy to be in a servant role?

Day 3 (John 1:29-31)

"Lamb of God" is a title loaded with meaning from the OT. Read Exodus 12:21-23. This was the origin of the Jewish "Passover" celebration, which Jesus transformed into the Lord's Supper.

1. How shocked would his Jewish hearers have been to hear these words? (1:29) Why?
2. Does John really mean the sin of the *whole* world? (See 1 Jn 2:1-2). How will Jesus do this?
3. Do you have the conviction that Jesus has taken your sin away? What is your confidence based on?

Day 4 (John 1:29-31 again!)

1. What does John mean when he says "...he was before me" (vs. 30), even though he was born before Jesus? (see Jn 8:58)
2. John publicly declares that his mission is to draw attention to and reveal the identity of the Messiah. How can we best draw attention to Jesus the Messiah? How 'in yer face' should Christians be?
3. List 'proofs' of the identity of Jesus as "the Christ" (Messiah)

Day 5 (John 1:32-34)

This appearance of Jesus is some time after his baptism by John. Verse 32 indicates that John is bearing witness to an event that has already taken place. This appearance is traditionally placed at the end of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness for forty days. For an account of Jesus' baptism see Luke 3:21ff.

1. John makes a clear distinction between his baptism (signifying repentance) and Jesus' "baptism with the Holy Spirit". When were you 'baptised with the Holy Spirit'?
2. What is the significance of the title "Son of God"? Where in Scripture does God use that title of Jesus?
3. Optional extra references: John 16:7-11; 1 Corinthians 12:12; Acts 9:17-19.

**Day 1 (John 1:35-51)**

1. Note the selfless way that John points to Jesus and makes no objection when two of his disciples leave him to follow Jesus. Are you happy to give friends and relatives over to the company and influence of more gifted teachers?
2. What do you think that they wanted most of all?
3. What would you have replied to Jesus' question: "What do you want?"

Day 2 (John 1:40-42)

1. Andrew went straight to his brother, Simon's house and told him excitedly "We have found the Messiah!" and then led him to Jesus. How can we make sure that our relatives will have a 'close encounter' with Jesus?
2. How would you show others who Christ is, through the use of the New Testament? What would it take for you to be able to do that?
3. "Cephas", or "Peter" means 'rock'. Yet the evidence of the Gospels is that Peter was anything but 'a rock' (see Matt 14:25-33; 16:21-24; 26:31-35). Why then did Jesus give him this name?

Day 3 (John 1:43-45)

1. What does it say about the personality of Jesus that he merely says to Philip, "Follow me" and he does so?
2. What are the differences between someone who says 'follow me' and someone who says 'consider my advice'. Are you 'following' Jesus or merely 'considering his advice'?
3. Why does Philip say "we have found ...Jesus..." when it is very clear that it was Jesus who found him? Can both statements be true?

Day 4 (John 1:46-51)

1. Note the difference between Jesus' approach to Philip and his approach to Nathanael. What sort of character was Nathanael?
2. Do you think that Jesus' statement about Nathanael, that he was a person "...in whom there is nothing false." Is it a 'tongue in cheek' dig at Nathanael, or is it a genuine compliment? (see Ps 32:2)
3. Nathanael asks Jesus, "How do you know me?" Do you really believe that the Lord Jesus Christ knows you as well as he knew Nathanael? What would you like Jesus to say about you in front of your friends?

Day 5 (John 1:46-51 again)

1. Read the story of Jacob's 'stairway to heaven' in Genesis 28:10-17. What crucial difference is there between Jacob's stairway (ladder), and the one which Jesus describes? (1:51)
2. What is the significance of the vision which Jesus describes, for the future of Nathanael and his companions?
3. Nathanael describes Jesus as the "Son of God," yet Jesus prefers to describe himself as "Son of Man" Why do you think this is so? To dig deeper look at Daniel 7:13,14; Rev.1:10-18.

**Day 1 (Read 2:1-11)**

1. What do you think were the expectations of the first followers of Jesus?
2. In those times, a wedding celebration could last for a week. To run out of wine was potentially of great embarrassment to the bridegroom who paid for the wedding. What does this tell you about Jesus?
3. Jesus made lots of wine (about 500 to 750 litres) and good quality wine. What does this tell you about Jesus and how does this challenge your expectations of Jesus?

Day 2 (Read 2:1-5)

1. What do you think Mary saw in Jesus in order to involve him in the situation (2:3)?
2. Jesus says to his mother "My time has not yet come" (v.4). What do you think he means by this? (see 5:28 7:8, 7:30, 8:20, 12:23, 12:27, 13:1, 17:1)
3. Even though his 'time had not yet come', why did Jesus do the miracle?
4. How might we learn from Mary's example of trusting in Jesus when she says "Do whatever he tells you", to the servants (2:5)?

Day 3 (Read 2:11)

1. How does this 'sign' reveal Jesus' glory (2:11 also 1:14)? Think about who Jesus is (1:3) and what the wine might represent?
2. Dig into the OT and read these passages using *wine*: See Isa 25:6-8 (about the richness), Amos 9:13-15 (about abundance) and Isa 55:1 (about wine as a gift). These passages helped the Israelites to long for better days during exile.
3. What is the significance of *wine* in this passage and the coming of Jesus?
4. What are your expectations of the coming of Jesus? How do they match the expectations in the Bible?

Day 4 (Read 2:11)

1. What is the point of 'signs' in the gospel of John?
2. Dig into the OT and think about the purpose of the signs performed by God? (see Deut 6:20-25)?
3. How does this 'sign' bring about faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God? How does it compare with what he have read in 1:12, 50?
4. Describe your faith in Jesus. If someone asked you why you believe in Jesus, what would you say?

Optional: There are many *signs* in the book of John (2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:48; 6:2, 26; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; 12:37). Is seeing the glory of God in *signs* any guarantee that a person will believe in Jesus (also see Nu 14:22).

Day 5 (Read 2:1-11 again)

1. Read through the passage again. The disciples know that the Christ (God's anointed King) has returned with glory and that their time of longing is over. They believe that Jesus is *the Christ*.
2. Do you long for Jesus to rule over the world and your life? How has Jesus met this longing?
3. Thank God that Jesus, the King of *glory* has come. Pray that your expectations of your Christ would be shaped as you read John's gospel.

**Day 1 (Read John 2:12-24)**

1. Capernaum in Galilee seems to have become Jesus' home. Who accompanies Jesus there from Cana? Consider the situation of Jesus' family. Mk 6:3 Mk 3:20-21 31-35 What was Jesus attitude to his mother and brothers? What did they think about Jesus?
2. Think how would Jesus' disciples and his brothers (Jn 7:5) would have gotten along? Do you have a family situation of believers and unbelievers? In what ways do you find it hard to be a witness in your own family situation?

Day 2 (Read John 2:13-16 compared with Mark 11:12-19)

1. When does John say the incident takes place? (Jewish calendar) Why is that important?
2. What does Jesus do to each of the different groups? Does it alter your impression of gentle Jesus, meek and mild??
3. What is the reaction of the Jewish rulers? How is this surprising, contrasting say, with what would happen if you started throwing out the pie and beer sellers at the MCG with a whip in hand?*

* Every gospel has the story of the cleansing of the temple. Yet John locates it at the beginning of his ministry whilst the other gospels all have it following the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. This has caused lots of controversy. John may have simply related the story out of sequence or it is very possible the cleansing happened twice. Read Leon Morris, Gospel of John or another commentary if you are interested.

Day 3 (Read Isaiah 56, Jeremiah 7:1-11)

1. Why was the old temple condemned by God? How is God going to change the situation of those excluded from the temple (eunuchs and the foreigners?)
2. Why does the desecration of the temple make Jesus so angry?
3. Have you experienced anger at the desecration of the church? (Physical or Spiritual)

Day 4 (Read Acts 6:8-15 & 7:44-60)

1. What was the accusation against Jesus at his trial? (Mk 14:57-59)
2. How does that also correspond to the accusation against Stephen?
3. How long had the process of building the temple been going on in Jesus day? What contrast does Jesus make?
4. Jesus is prepared to shock people with statements that were easy to misinterpret, why do you think he did that?
5. When did the disciple understand the meaning of Jesus' words?*

* The temple rebuilding was begun in the 18th year of Herod. ie 19-20BC. This dates the incident fairly accurately to 27-28AD.

Day 5 (Read John 2:23-25)

1. What attracted people to Jesus? How did they respond to Jesus?
2. Why is Jesus wary of entrusting himself to people? Could Jesus entrust himself to you?
3. Building religious buildings is a human activity where the function of the building is often lost. Pray for great wisdom on the part of BPC people involved in looking for property to build or buy for our use.

**Day 1 (Read John 3:1-21 but focus on 3:1-8)**

Read the passage through. We will look at some of the Old Testament background in the following days.

1. Why is it important to be born again? (See 1:3,5) What is the kingdom of God? Is there any other way of entering it?
2. How does one come to be born again? How do you know if you have been born again?
3. Are you born again? If you can't answer this last question with a hearty "yes" take time now to pray and ask the Lord Jesus for this new life, and make sure you talk to someone you know is a Christian about it. If you can say yes take time to give God thanks for the work of His powerful life giving Spirit in your life.

Day 2 (Read John 3:9-13)

1. Why did Jesus expect Nicodemus as a teacher of Israel to know what He was talking about? (Jn 3:10-11)
2. Read Ezekiel 36:24-32 (If you have time it would be helpful to read Ezekiel 36:1 – 37:14). What does God promise to do for a people under his just judgement in Eze 36:25-27? How does this help us understand what Jesus says of the new birth in John 3.
3. Jesus was very blunt with Nicodemus. Why? Are we offended or grateful when God is blunt with us in His word?

Day 3 (Read John 3:14-15)

1. What is Jesus talking about when He says He must be lifted up (3:14-15)? (See Jn 12:23-33).
2. What is the purpose of Jesus being lifted up? What is the relation of 'entering the kingdom' to 'eternal life'?
3. Read Numbers 21:4-9. What was the purpose of the snake? In what ways can Jesus compare Himself to the snake?

Day 4 (Read John 3:16-21)

1. What is the world 3:16? Why is it so extraordinary that God should love it? See John 1:10, 7:7, 8:23, 12:31, 14:17, 31, 15:18-20, 16:8-11, 18:36
2. Who has taken the initiative in the Son's coming? Why?
3. Why did the Son come?
4. Do you care for the 'world' as God does? How do you show that? Take time to pray for the 'world' and its life.

Day 5 (Read 3:1-21 as revision)

Then ask the big questions.

1. Why don't some people welcome Jesus? (See 3:19-20)
2. What does verse 21 suggest lies behind some people coming to Jesus?
3. Do you have eternal life? On what basis?
4. Take time to thank God for the gift of His Son, and for loving us in this gift.

Day 1 (Read 3:22-36)

1. John the Baptist and Jesus have parallel ministries for a time. The controversy between John's disciples and THE JEWS develops into a major issue. What situation could this lead to?
2. Why are John's disciples so keen to protect John's status?
3. How does John defuse the situation?
4. How should we react to God blessing others more than us? Or vice versa, do you enjoy a superiority to others? How would John the Baptist counsel you?

Day 2 (Read John 3:27-30)

1. Write out 3:30 on a piece of card or front of your diary. Otherwise, put a sticky note on your computer screen that says: "He must increase. I must decrease"
2. How does John accept that Jesus will be greater?
3. How does he demonstrate joy at the situation?
4. Does it feel strange looking at the card saying "I must decrease"? Why is it difficult to display joy at that happening?

Note: Jesus' ministry already is more popular than John's (Read John 4:1, 2)
It says Jesus himself does not baptise people, why not?

Day 3

1. Why is the testimony of Jesus generally rejected? (Jn 3:32)
2. Look at 3:35, 36. What is the place of the Son? What are the consequences of believing and unbelief?
3. Are you believing in the Son? How can you be certain of eternal life today? (See 1 John 5:11,12)

Look at your card. "He must increase, I must decrease" Do you think Jesus can increase his reign and rule in your life without a decrease from somewhere else?

Day 4

1. Do you understand in order to believe or believe in order to understand? Consider carefully 3:33 cf. 7:17 8:31,32
2. Why is the path to understanding so difficult for modern people?

How are you going with decreasing? This doesn't mean losing a few kilograms!! John the Baptist lost his head!

There is no bible talk on John's gospel this week. However, you can do the following things to help you to revise and thank God for what you have learnt in the last two months:

1. Go through John 1-3 and underline or note any references you can find to Jesus' death.
2. Go through the John 1-3 and mark the following words: *telling, witness, testimony, and any other related term or pronoun.*
3. Thank God for the specific things that you are learning about Jesus Christ the Son of God.
4. Pray that you might continue to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that you might keep obeying him.