



John 1-3

In the beginning was the Word

Study Notes

For groups or individuals

Introduction

I like to think of the four Gospels as being similar to the multi-camera angles used for live sport. All of them are showing the same action, but each comes from a different angle and often has a particular focus. John is very clear at the end of his account that he could have included much more, but he's selected his material so that we *'may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.'*

But John's Gospel is not just for coming to believe in Jesus in the first instance. It is part of the God-breathed Scriptures given to encourage, challenge and equip us as his people. It is more than a history or biography, it is a Spiritual book with the power to draw us into a closer walk with him.

As always, your time together may move on to other passages and lines of discussion. Hopefully these notes can root each discussion in God's word as we then apply it to our calling as disciples of Jesus. You may like to break up the series with some socials or extra times of fellowship. I hope that you will spend time each week praying for one another, and the prayer suggestions are intended as an addition to your own prayer requests.

Gospel Background

The author of this Gospel has been identified as John, son of Zebedee since the earliest days of Christianity. Although not claimed as such, most Christians have followed this understanding of the author. He was there, he saw and heard what happened, he spent time with Jesus and most likely wrote it all down towards the end of his life for future generations until Jesus returns.

1 In the beginning was the Word

Opening discussions... In everyday life, how do we get to know people better?

Read John 1:1-18

Getting to know Jesus in John...

What are some of the words and images John use to describe Jesus?

How would you explain what John means for Jesus to be the true light?

Is it amazing that a Jewish man would say *all* who believe are 'born of God'?

Why do you think John talks so much about grace in this passage?
Does knowing Jesus mean we can know what God is like? (v18)

Getting to know Jesus in our own lives...

Do you think of Jesus as your creator, life and light?

How can we be like John and witness to the true light?

What does faith in Jesus actually look like, and is it the same for everyone?

Do you know that you have received grace upon grace?!

Prayer

As well as your own prayer requests, why not pray that this time in John's Gospel would help us all to know Jesus better and make him better known?

2 The Spirit descended on him

Opening discussions...

Have you been baptised, and do you remember it well? What does it mean to you now?

Read John 1:29-34

Getting to know Jesus in John...

What is John describing Jesus as in v29?

How could Jesus be before John when he's the younger cousin?

What was John's main role as a prophet? (v31)

Why did Jesus need the Spirit to descend if he is already God?

How did Jesus' ministry surpass even John's? (v33-34)

Getting to know Jesus in our own lives...

How can we remain grateful for Jesus taking away our sin?

Is there anything we can learn here from John about how to be humble?

Can we know the baptism of the Holy Spirit that John talks about here?

If so, does it always have to be a dramatic experience?

Have you asked Jesus recently to keep filling you with his Holy Spirit?

Prayer

Perhaps pray for us to know God's Spirit through this promise that Jesus would bring his baptism. It may be a particular filling of the Spirit for a particular purpose that God has called you to.

3 The disciples followed him

Opening discussions... What was it that made you want to follow Jesus?

Read John 1:35-42

Getting to know Jesus in John...

Do you think there's a deliberate emphasis in the way John repeats himself?

Did the disciples of John leave to follow Jesus because they trusted his prophecy?

How could Andrew have already started to believe that Jesus is the Messiah?

What is the significance of Jesus changing Peter's name, and how does this become fulfilled later on?

Getting to know Jesus in our own lives...

Do you feel like you're really *following* Jesus in your life?

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus nowadays?

Is there something for us in how to share our faith by echoing

Andrew and saying to people, 'Come and see...'?

Do you really believe that Jesus knows you like he knew Simon-Peter?

Prayer

Please pray for our own walks with Jesus—for closeness, growth, trust and love of him in the way we live our lives.

4 Nathanael was shocked by him

Opening discussions... who are the people who really know you best?

Read John 1:43-51

Getting to know Jesus in John...

How does Philip connect Jesus to Scriptures' prophecies?

Would that have been a significant thing to do?

Have we already heard the phrase 'Come and see?'

How might Nathanael have felt that this stranger knew and saw him?

Does Jesus play himself down here, or make a huge claim for himself?

Getting to know Jesus in our own lives...

Is it reassuring or concerning that Jesus can know everything about us?

Does that change when we remember he always has, and still loves us?

What might Jesus say about you, if it was you approaching him?
Does it help your faith to know that Jesus is with you by his Spirit, still knowing, and still watching out for us?

Do you trust that Jesus is interested in you?

Prayer

Perhaps pray that we would know Jesus closely like Nathanael, and hear for ourselves how much interest he takes in our lives.

5 The servants were amazed by him

Opening discussions... when was the last time you were surprised?

Read John 2:1-12

Getting to know Jesus in John...

Is it surprising to think of Jesus relaxing at a wedding party?
Why do you think Mary goes to her son when they run out of wine?

And why might Jesus seem to say he won't act, but then does?
Is there a deeper meaning here than just saving the host's embarrassment?

Why do you think John then includes the very ordinary events in v12?

Why might John choose to include a miracle about wine first?
(Think of the last supper and the other vine images in John)

Getting to know Jesus in our own lives...

Do you think of Jesus as still able to work miracles?

Are we sometimes limited in the types of miracle that we pray for?

Does this gospel account modify your picture of Jesus at all?

Prayer

Maybe there are some in need of Jesus' miracle working power in your group. Maybe there's some people in need of a reminder that he cares about the ordinary events of our lives as well.

6 The temple was cleansed by him

Opening discussions... Is it ever right to be angry? When's it not?

Read John 2:13-25

Getting to know Jesus in John...

Why was the selling in the temple so offensive to Jesus?

Is this a surprising image of what Jesus could be like?

Does anyone actually get hurt?

Read Psalm 69:6-9 for some context to the reference in v17

What is Jesus alluding to in v19

Was it fair for the Jewish leaders to ask for a sign?

Getting to know Jesus in our own lives...

How do you feel about Jesus as you read this account?

Does the Church ever fall foul of the same financial temptation?

If our hearts are now God's temple, how carefully should we guard them?

How does it feel to know that Jesus knows our hearts? (v25)

Prayer

It would be good to pray for holiness and purity as God's people. We are now the temple for his Spirit, so without guilt, let's pray that we would live lives dedicated to him.

7 We are saved in him

Opening discussions... Why is John 3:16 so widely known?

Read John 3:1-21

Getting to know Jesus in John...

Is it significant that Nicodemus visited Jesus at night?

How does he show us that not all religious leaders opposed Jesus?

The same word can mean born 'again' and 'from above'. How does Nicodemus confusion help us see what Jesus meant? Could he have meant both?

In Greek there are no speech marks, so some Bibles end Jesus speech at v15, and some don't. Does it change the meaning?

How do verses 18-21 relate to the first passage of John's Gospel?

Getting to know Jesus in our own lives...

What does it mean to be born again?

how do the gifts and fruit of the Spirit show that we have been born of the Spirit?

As you read this, how Important does Jesus make it to believe in him?

Is belief purely about what we think, or does it mean more than that?

Prayer

A good time to pray for those who don't yet believe, and to thank Jesus for his sacrificial death that we might be saved into his life.