



# JESUS FIRST

RETURNING TO OUR FIRST LOVE  
REVITALIZING OUR FIRST WORK

*Making, Sending, Multiplying*

# VISION

## *Sunday* 23

*Making, Sending, Multiplying*

**WE GLORIFY GOD**

*By Making, Sending and Multiplying*

**Gospel-Centered  
Disciples of Jesus Christ**

*Who Take the Gospel to  
Every Person and  
Establish a Church for  
Every People*

# "Vision Sunday"

## WHAT DOES JESUS EXPECT OF A CHURCH IN TRANSITION?

### Revelation 2:1-7 – "A Church's Vision Screening Test"

- **Who is Jesus? (v.1)**  
*What kind of leader does God desire for His church?*
- **Commendation (vv. 2, 3, 6)**  
*What kind of activity does Jesus value in His church?*
- **Condemnation (v. 4)**  
*What kind of heart does Jesus value in His church?*
- **Counsel (v. 5)**  
*How do we develop the kind of heart Jesus values?*
- **Promise (v.7)**  
*Why shouldn't we wait until we have a Senior Pastor?*

## VISION FOR 2023 – "JESUS FIRST"

- **Returning to our First Love: Jesus Christ**
  - **Revitalizing our First Work: Faithful Sowing**  
*(Psalm 126:5; Mark 1:17; Matthew 13:4)*
1. Sunday AM sermon series through the Gospel of John led by our pastors and elders: "Who is Jesus?"
  2. Complementary LifeGroup teaching in the letter of 1 John.
  3. Unified, church-wide Bible reading plan through John's Gospel.
  4. New Equipping ministry for Sunday nights: "Come & See!"
  5. Renewed commitment to the personal responsibility of sowing the seed of the Gospel through acts of Christlike kindness, spiritual conversations, and evangelization.

# Week 1

## **Monday: John 1:1-18**

John 1 focuses on Jesus' identity and reminds us that the beginning of His earthly ministry was not the beginning of His existence. He was present and active in creation. (See how the opening lines of John reference the opening lines of Genesis?) Jesus is called "The Word" in this chapter to clarify His divine, distinct identity. Words are not a person, but reveal a person's mind and will (which are unknowable unless revealed). How does Jesus reveal the mind and will of God the Father?

## **Tuesday: John 1:19-34**

John the Baptist announces one of the seven titles ascribed to Jesus in chapter 1, "The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world." Follow these cross-references to explore some of the richness of this title: Genesis 22:8; Exodus 12:1-13; Isaiah 53:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:6-12, 12:11, 17:14.

## **Wednesday: John 1:35-51**

What is so great about Jesus, anyway? "Come and see!" (John 1:39, 46) This is not an invitation to a location, but to a Person. The inference is simple—proximity to Jesus is the only way to find out what He is all about. In the same way, our lost family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers need to be invited to see the person and work of Jesus in each of our lives as we draw near to Him. (Note the nature of the invitation: "Come [with me] and see" not "Go [by yourself] and see.")

**Thursday: John 2:1-12**

John 2:5 might be some of the best “mom advice” ever given. It still applies today! Bind that truth to your heart as you live in the service of King Jesus today. (Also, continue to follow the “Genesis 1 breadcrumbs” John started dropping in chapter 1 by checking out these cross-references: Genesis 1:1-2, 31 & John 2:6-11.)

**Friday: John 2:13-25**

When Jesus traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover, He found the temple overrun with vendors and money changers attempting to turn worship into profit. He cast them out and called the temple, “My Father’s house.” (2:16) This was a clear statement of divinity and His relationship with God the Father. (While it is common for us to refer to God this way, it would not have been acceptable for a Jew.) This startling event initiated His rivalry with the Jewish religious leaders and established His spiritual authority among the people.



# WHO IS JESUS?



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How did God use me to sow the seed last week?

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# Week 2

## **Monday: John 3:1-21**

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and Jewish religious leader, had witnessed some of Jesus' miracles and heard the authority with which He spoke. Nicodemus believed Jesus was from God, but probably did not think He was the Messiah at this point. At the heart of their conversation about the kingdom of God, Jesus introduces the life-changing work of regeneration through the Holy Spirit — “you must be born again.” (3:3) What about you? Have you been born again? Take time today to record your “born again” story and challenge yourself to share your “born again” story with someone else this week!

## **Tuesday: John 3:22-36**

Nicodemus may have had some questions about the identity of Jesus, but John the Baptist knew Jesus was the Messiah and why He came. John humbly acknowledged that his time as the Messiah's forerunner was ending. He had obediently set the table for the main course, and it was time for Jesus to take over the work of calling people to repentance and faith. Meditate on the words of John the Baptist in verse 30, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Examine your schedule, your hobbies, your parenting and grandparenting, the conversations you have at home, at work, or at school. How does the truth of John 3:30 need to invade these areas of life leading you to repentance and faith?



**Wednesday: John 4:1-26**

Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well in chapter 4 may be different in tone and context than the conversation with Nicodemus in chapter 3, but the message is the same. A relationship with Jesus is the only way to new life, spiritual satisfaction, and true fulfillment. Go back and meditate on verses 10, 13-14. Is the joyful life of the living water "springing up" in you today?

**Thursday: John 4:27-42**

Anyone who has truly experienced the new life, spiritual satisfaction, and true fulfillment in the living water of Jesus is excited for other people to drink deeply and experience Him too! When was the last time you were this excited to share Jesus with someone? (see vv. 28-29, 39) Ask the Lord to give you the boldness, excitement, and opportunity to share the living water with someone today. They may experience the same joy of verse 42!

**Friday: John 4:43-54**

The story we read today takes the miraculous works of Jesus to another level as He transcends space and time to heal the ruler's son. It required great faith for the ruler to return home simply on the words of Jesus alone, but this is like the promises of God to us! When God makes a promise, He points us to Jesus, His Word made flesh. Because God fulfilled His greatest promise in Jesus, we can confidently believe He will faithfully keep all His promises.



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# Week 3

## **Monday: John 5:1-15**

Jesus heals yet another person without even touching them. All Jesus has to do is speak and His words carry the creative power to heal and restore. (It is another call-back to the creation story in Genesis. Jesus is the powerful “logos” or “word” of God.) Jesus still has the power to heal and restore today. Even though this man had been disabled for 38 years, that was nothing to Jesus. No matter how long you have been waiting, do not give up on the people or situations that need the healing, restoring power of Jesus.

## **Tuesday: John 5:16-30**

Jesus again points to His divine nature in verse 17 when the Pharisees question why He was “working” (healing) on the Sabbath. Jesus simply replied that like His Father (God), He also had the right to work on the Sabbath. It was a direct, hard truth for these religious leaders to swallow. “Since God is working today, so am I.” What a blessing it is to know that God never takes a “day off” from caring for us. Thank Him today!

## **Wednesday: John 5:31-47**

This is a difficult section for many reasons, but one of them is the criticism of Jesus to religious people. In verses 39–40, Jesus lays out a simple issue for religious people: we might know things about Jesus, but we do not know the life of Jesus. In other words, there is a gap between Bible knowing and Bible doing. The life of Jesus is in us through the Holy Spirit so we might live like Jesus, not just know about Jesus. Ask the Lord to reveal at least one way you can grow in obediently living the life of Jesus through the Holy Spirit for Bible doing, not just Bible knowing.

**Thursday: John 6:1-15**

This account appears in all four gospels, which is significant. While all four gospel writers have a different tone and purpose, they all wanted to make sure we knew this story. Jesus is the only thing that satisfies our spiritual hunger. Nothing else can satisfy our hunger. Religion, wealth, relationships, materialism, even a simple life marked by kindness and comfort will all fall short and leave us hungry. Not Jesus. He alone satisfies. Turn again to Him in prayer today. Confess that Jesus alone satisfies and repent of vain attempts to find purpose and satisfaction anywhere else.

**Friday: John 6:16-21**

“It is I. Do not be afraid.” Do you find yourself overwhelmed and afraid in a storm today? If not today, you may someday soon. While being in the same boat as Jesus might put you into some stormy waters, it is good to know that the One Who is in the boat is in control. Though many followers of Jesus did not experience this fearful, near-death storm, they also did not get to experience His mighty deliverance. Every storm is an opportunity to draw near and experience the deliverance of Jesus. Hold tight to Him. Do not be afraid. [Scripture for Meditation: Psalm 23, 46, 91]



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# Week 4

## **Monday: John 6:22-40**

It is so easy to become distracted by the blessings of God and forget the chief blessing of God is Himself. God is not an unknowable, far-off gift-giver. He is real and near and desires relationship with us. The Psalmist reminds us to seek the face (“presence”) of God. In this chapter, we will see many people seeking the things that are in God’s hands rather than seeking His presence. They said, “Jesus! We were looking all over for you!” Jesus replied, “No, you were just looking for bread.” Are you seeking the presence of Jesus today or just what He can do for you?

## **Tuesday: John 6:41-71**

A difficult synagogue sermon from Jesus sees a hoard of insincere “bread-seekers” bolting. But when Jesus turns to the twelve and asks if any of them will desert him, Peter speaks for the group, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (6:68-69) Note the passage does not say the disciples understood the difficult teaching. It says they knew Who Jesus was. We may not always understand what God is doing or the way He is leading us, but we can always trust that we know Him and we will not find real life anywhere else.



### **Wednesday: John 7:1-13**

Verses 12-13 gives us a snapshot of the early responses to Jesus. Some believed Jesus was good. Others believed Jesus was a phony. Unfortunately, many who believed the truth about Jesus were afraid to speak up (7:13). As you can see, not much has changed in 2,000 years. Why are Jesus-followers so often afraid to speak positively about Jesus? You do not find people exploring Buddhism to be shy about their exploration. The “deconstructionist” movement is certainly not shy about their beliefs. Just like in verse 13, your positive opinions about Jesus may not be popular, but they are true and they are life-giving. In the same way that a married person publicly wears a wedding band without shame, do not be afraid to speak openly, lovingly, and truthfully about your affections for Jesus.

### **Thursday: John 7:14-24**

The Pharisees continue to criticize Jesus for not acting like the Messiah they expected. But Jesus begins his conversation with an interesting point. “If anyone desires to do [God’s] will, he will know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” (7:17) In other words, an honest search for truth and an authentic desire to please God will always lead you to the truth of Jesus because He is the logos of God. If we have created a false version of Jesus in our mind, the truths of Jesus might seem confusing. Pray that the Lord would give you a mind hungry for truth and a heart longing to please the Father so you can know and understand the real Jesus.

### **Friday: John 7:25-53**

Jesus and his teaching continues to be controversial and divisive. His identity and His activity simply do not fit with the religious traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. Thankfully, our faith is not based on who people think Jesus is or what He should be like, but on what He has done. If we have found our preconceived notions and beliefs challenged by the teaching or actions of Jesus, we should pause to consider whether we have made the same mistake as the scribes and Pharisees by creating an imaginary Messiah rather than accepting the truth of who Jesus is and how He wants us to live.



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How did God use me to sow the seed last week?

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# Week 5

## **Monday: John 7:53-8:11**

Does Jesus break the Law for the sake of love? Impossible! Was this woman's sin worthy of condemnation and punishment? Absolutely. (See Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22-24) So what are we to make of Jesus' concluding statement in verse 11? Go back to John 3:16-18 for a moment. Jesus is God's expression of love to an already-condemned world leading all who believe to eternal life. John 3:18 reminds us, "He who believes in [Jesus] is not condemned..." In her moment of condemnation, this woman does not argue. Knowing what she deserves, she throws herself on the mercy of Jesus. Likewise, anyone willing to admit their sin and recognize its consequences will find mercy and grace at the feet of Jesus. Condemnation is washed away as new life is born! "Go and sin no more." (8:11) [Scripture for Meditation: Romans 5:8, 8:1]

## **Tuesday: John 8:12-20**

By calling Himself "the light of the world" and "the light of life," Jesus has declared that He is God's illuminating presence in the world. He is Goodness personified. Whether it is the darkness of the world or the darkness within, deliverance from the darkness can only be found in Jesus. Just in case there was any question about what Jesus was concluding here, He goes on to reiterate His divine, distinct relationship to God the Father in verses 19-20. (John doubles-down on this teaching in 1 John 1:5-7.)

**Wednesday: John 8:21-32**

As the dialogue continues, Jesus condemns the Jews for their lack of belief in Him. “You will die in your sins,” He warns twice in verse 24. Their unbelief separates them from God because they cannot imagine this man is their long-awaited Messiah. In contrast, Jesus obeys the will of The Father resolutely (vv. 28-29) and declares freedom for all who “know the truth.” The word for “know” in verse 32 does not simply imply head-knowledge. It is an intimate, experiential understanding. To “know the truth” is not primarily about fact-finding, but coming to a personal, life-altering understanding of Who Jesus is. Do you want to be free? Know the Truth. Know Jesus.

**Thursday: John 8:31-47**

The Jews respond to Jesus’ teaching about finding freedom in Him by insisting they are already free because they are children of Abraham. (8:33) Jesus reminds them that Abraham’s true descendants are those who know God by faith (that is, “believing loyalty”). A sobering question for us today: Are we trusting in anything other than Jesus for right standing before God? Do we trust in our church involvement? Our family’s spiritual heritage? Good works? Baptism? “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” (vv. 34-36)

**Friday: John 8:48-59**

Jesus teaches that He is greater than Abraham and anyone who “keeps My word shall never see death.” (8:51) The words of Abraham, Moses, David, and all the prophets of Israel could not guarantee the life Jesus was promising that day. They were lesser men pointing to a greater Deliverance. And as Jesus concluded, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” (8:58) He is the promised Deliverance Who engages death so we might live!



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# Week 6

## **Monday: John 9:1-34**

John continues to explore the implications of Jesus' claim as "The Light of the World" by recording an encounter with a man born blind. "Who sinned? This man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (9:2) An odd question to us, but in that day, this was a common way to explain physical maladies. Jesus challenges their preconceived notions about pain and suffering by answering, "Neither...but that the works of God should be revealed in him." (8:3) Jesus proves "The Light of the World" will one day restore the light of God's glory to every aspect of creation wrecked by darkness.

## **Tuesday: John 9:35-41**

While the blind man rejoices and celebrates the light, the Pharisees become progressively hardened and blinded by the darkness of jealousy and unbelief. But Jesus makes it clear that He did not come to save the "sinless" who claim perfect spiritual vision (see vv. 39-41), but to save the broken, blind, and spiritually destitute. Think back to the opening of John 8. The sinning woman who throws herself on the mercy of Jesus is forgiven while the religious elite walked away embittered. Bring your brokenness and blindness to Jesus today. It will not surprise Him, and there is grace for the humble. [Scripture for Meditation: Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5-7]

## **Wednesday: John 10:1-10**

John 10 contains two more "I am" statements of Jesus. The first appears in verses 7-9 where Jesus establishes Himself as "the door for the sheep." (10:7) Just as Jesus is the only water that satisfies, the only bread that fills, and the only Light of the World to drive away the darkness, He is truly the only way to God. "No one comes to the Father except through Me," He will reiterate in John 14:6. The door of Jesus is the only way "in" with God, and praise the Lord He is a door that only swings one direction—enter! There is no "exit" door in God's sheep-pen. "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (10:10)



**Thursday: John 10:11-21**

The second “I am” statement in this chapter begins in verse 11. “I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” As the Shepherd provides food, comfort, and protection, He takes a personal interest in each sheep and knows them by name because He loves them (see 10:3-4, 14). This is important because the only reason for sheep to learn and know the voice of their Shepherd and follow His lead is because they grow to understand He is working for their good. This relationship develops loyalty and trust and gives the Shepherd a healthy control over the sheep. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, wants us to live in that kind of trusting, loyal relationship, and He demonstrated to us (by sacrificing His life for us) that our lives are valuable and safe in His care.

**Friday: John 10:22-42**

“I and the Father are one.” (10:30) Jesus, by plainly stating His divine nature in the midst of the Temple, gives us an incredible picture. Jesus is The Holy One—the One God has set apart as the true Temple where God’s powerful presence dwells. And though the religious leaders wanted to kill Him for blasphemy, Jesus’ radical claims were backed by His supernatural power and authority. This is another great passage to highlight for future conversations about the divine nature and claims of Jesus!



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# Week 7

## **Monday: John 11:1-26**

John 11 records one of Jesus' greatest miracles: the resurrection of Lazarus. Though Jesus heard Lazarus was gravely ill, He did not rush to Bethany to heal him. Instead, He waited and arrived precisely when He meant to—four days later. Lazarus died during the divine delay. But Jesus said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” (11:4) Inevitably, we will have times in life where we disagree sharply with God's timing. But God, being eternal and good, always has the long view in mind. As Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (11:25-26) No Christian ever really dies because Jesus is our eternal life! (Colossians 3:1-4)

## **Tuesday: John 11:21-37**

We are going to back up a few verses to address the response of Mary, Martha, and the mourners. Everyone concludes the same thing—death beat Jesus by a few days. “If only...” is the repeated refrain in every response. Death always wins. End of story, right? Though the conclusion of this story resides in tomorrow's reading, we know the One Who calls Himself “the resurrection and the life” will not give death the final word. The same is true for every believer in Christ. Death will never have the final word!

**Wednesday: John 11:38-44**

“Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” (11:40) Think back to the “If only...” statements from yesterday’s reading. The assumption is death always wins, right? Even with Jesus’ powerful display of resurrection power, the same “If only...” phrases probably floated around Jerusalem following His death on Good Friday. But the glory of God seen in the miracle of John 11 is nothing compared to what is coming! Consider this: What kind of hope does the resurrection give to believers today? [Scripture for Meditation: 1 Corinthians 15:55-58]

**Thursday: John 11:45-57**

The resurrection of Lazarus would prove costly. Following this miracle, the threat against Jesus’ life intensified. Unfortunately, the Jewish religious leaders could not be convinced even by a dead man returning to life! “If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.” (11:48) They were so blinded by their jealousy and pride that they did not recognize the glory of God before their very eyes. They did have one thing right—believing in Jesus will cost you everything. As Mark 8:36 tells us, “But what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”

**Friday: John 12:1-11**

John 12 is the calm before the storm. The heat of hostility rises following the resurrection of Lazarus. The cross is near. Jesus’ knowledge of His death makes the dramatic scene of Mary’s sacrificial anointing with burial oils even more symbolic. Mary’s selfless worship is sharply contrasted against the greedy betrayal of Judas and the murderous intentions of the chief priests. When opposition rises, true followers of Jesus will emulate the selfless, sacrificial love of their Savior.



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# Week 8

## **Monday: John 12:12-19**

In Roman culture, the “Triumph” was a military parade honoring a victorious general returning from war as a favored son of Rome. It was usually self-aggrandizing, exaggerating the feats of the general and humiliating the enemies of Rome. Jesus’ “Triumphal Entry” was none of those things. He enters on a donkey’s colt, not a great white warhorse. (John will later record a vastly different future entrance in Revelation 19:11-16.) Jesus humbles Himself rather than displaying His greatness. And He intends to die for His enemies, not humiliate them. Zechariah 9:9 predicted this moment over 500 years earlier, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation. Lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

## **Tuesday: John 12:20-36**

John 12 marks Jesus’ final public call to look to the Light of the World and believe. John’s illustrative language is purposeful when he states Jesus (the Light) was hidden from the public after this point (12:36). The next time the public would see the Light of the World, He would be “lifted up from the earth, [to] draw all peoples to [Himself].” (12:32) The same is true today. As we lift up the person and work of Jesus, the Light of the World, He will draw the world out of darkness and into His Light.

## **Wednesday: John 12:37-50**

Centuries earlier, God’s people had promised to love Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. They failed repeatedly. Now a new generation of hard-hearted Israelites will soon transform the jubilant shouts of “Hosanna” to “Crucify Him!” You can almost hear the anguish building in Jesus’ voice as He pleads with the people, “I have come to save you!” (12:47) The covenant-command to love God requires both affection and action, and Jesus was prepared to accomplish this work. In the ultimate expression of love, God’s Righteous Servant will suffer for the unrighteous, bringing life from death. [Scripture for Meditation: Isaiah 53]



**Thursday: John 13:1-17**

Three truths emerge from the beginning of John 13 that Jesus would have His servants remember well. First, “He loved them to the end.” (13:1) Christlike love never stops short of completing the task. God’s love does not quit or give up before the job is done. Second, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.” (13:7) We are rarely aware of the largescale plans of God, Who sees the end from the beginning. Be patient. He is working through His enduring love for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28). Third, “... you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Jesus demonstrated the heart and attitude of a servant as the perfect picture of humility. Peter protests and even denies Jesus a few hours later, but his feet were washed. Judas walks out to betray Jesus with clean feet. Every other disciple will flee Gethsemane with washed feet. Jesus knew this, and He served them anyway. “A servant is not greater than his Master.” (13:16)

**Friday: John 13:18-38**

Has it ever bothered you how clearly Judas is exposed as the betrayer, yet how clueless the other disciples remained? There was nothing suspicious about Judas in this sense. The disciples begin questioning if Jesus is alluding to an accidental or unintentional betrayal while Peter vows undying loyalty (Matthew 26:22; John 13:36-38). But Jesus loved Judas, and was troubled for Judas’ sake. (13:21) Though it was already in the heart of Judas to betray Jesus, all His Master’s intercessory power was available to him. But Judas rejected the love and favor of Jesus and Satan entered him (Matthew 26:14-16; John 13:2; Luke 22:31-32).

# THE RABBI OF LOVE

WEEK 8 | JOHN 13:1, 34-35



Sermon Notes (What does the Bible say?):

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# Week 9

## **Monday: John 14:1-14**

As an uneasy feeling begins to overtake the upper room, Jesus turns to comfort and instruct. “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.” (14:1) Anticipating the sorrow the disciples would feel at His departure, Jesus assures them through another “I am” statement. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me.” (14:6) Jesus is the only reliable source of redemptive revelation. According to Him, there is no other way to be right with God. Do you believe this? Have you shared this Good News with someone who needs to know? Refresh your prayer list today of people who need to know this truth and begin working towards a plan for sharing this Good News!

## **Tuesday: John 14:15-31**

Jesus promises the comforting, helping presence of His Holy Spirit. In this brief section, we learn the Holy Spirit will comfort, help, teach, give peace, illuminate the truth, affirm God’s love for us, be ever-present within us, and help us remember what is true. The Spirit increases our understanding of God and His will for our lives so we might obey the Father, just as Jesus obeys. If Jesus has truly changed a person’s heart, obedience in the Holy Spirit will follow.

## **Wednesday: John 15:1-11**

Jesus gives His final “I am” statement in John 15:1, “I am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser.” As branches connected to the True Vine, we draw life and bear fruit as we faithfully obey the will of God (that is, “abide”). God, the Master Gardener, cuts away branches showing no signs of life and prunes faithful branches to help them yield even more fruit. Though the pruning can be painful, it is for our good and His glory. The point is clear—the life of Christ lived through us is a life marked by fruitfulness, love, God’s glory, and joy! (15:8-11)

**Thursday: John 15:12-16:4**

The metaphor shifts out of the garden and into a working relationship of servants-turned-friends. “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends.” (15:15) Jesus wants us to understand that His mission is personal, not professional. As such, His mission will put us at odds with the world who hates Him. But do not be discouraged! If we draw life from the world, the world would love us. But because Christ is our life, we will bear much fruit to the glory of God! [Scripture for Meditation: 1 John 2:15-17; Colossians 3:1-20]

**Friday: John 16:5-16:15**

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you...” (16:7) This truth had to strike the disciples as complete fantasy! Jesus’ departure is advantageous to our spiritual success? But as He continues, Jesus helps us see the incredible work the Holy Spirit will do through us! Through our loyal obedience to The Father, the Spirit will convict the world of sin, put righteousness on display, and rightly judge the world using God’s definition of good and evil. How will we accomplish all this? Only through the Spirit’s strength.



# WHO IS JESUS?



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## **“JESUS FIRST” SOWING THIS WEEK:**

“This week, I am praying for the opportunity...”

- To bless \_\_\_\_\_ with a special act of Christlike kindness.
- To have a spiritual conversation with \_\_\_\_\_.
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How did God use me to sow the seed last week?

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# Week 10

## **Monday: John 16:16-33**

This chapter ends with the words, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (16:33) The irony in that conclusion is found in the content of the message up to that point. Jesus tells His friends that He is leaving soon and they will weep, lament, and endure painful sorrow like a woman experiencing labor. (16:16-22) But despite the struggles and hardship, the promise of peace in a hostile world comes from the assurance of Jesus’ victorious, interceding presence before the Father on our behalf as His Holy Spirit works in us.

## **Tuesday: John 17:1-26**

John 17 is often referred to as Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer.” It includes a prayer for Himself, a prayer for His disciples, and a prayer for us—future believers of every age. Jesus prays for unity (“oneness”) for both His disciples and all future believers. He wants believers, through the Holy Spirit, to experience the beauty and power of oneness with the Father and Son to engage the lost with the Good News of the love of God. Jesus demonstrates selfless love in the face of death, preemptively proving that not even death can prevent the advance of the Gospel!

## **Wednesday: John 18:1; Matthew 26:36-46**

Unlike other Gospels, John does not describe Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Instead, he begins with the betrayal of Judas. However, we will use Matthew’s Gospel to help fill in the story of the Garden of Gethsemane to examine the agony of Jesus as He grapples with the cup of God’s wrath—a cup which He will drink for us. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 26:39) Pray, as Jesus did, that we might live with selfless obedience to the will of the Father. “The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (36:41)



**Thursday: John 18:2-3; Matthew 26:47-50**

In first-century Israel, the kiss of a friend was a sign of deep respect, honor, and brotherly love (see Luke 7:45; Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). For a student who greatly respected his Rabbi, a kiss was an expression of honor and loyalty. Judas laid the trap. “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.” A sign of true friendship, good will, and intimacy would become the sign of betrayal. The consideration today is simple and sobering. Public affection for Jesus might not tell the whole story. Does your heart truly belong to Jesus?

**Friday: John 18:4-15; Matthew 26:51-56**

Despite another declaration of divine authority and display of divine power through a miraculous healing, Jesus is taken into custody. Jesus knew what was happening and allowed it to happen. Matthew 26:53 records Jesus saying, “Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” As the divine Son of God, Jesus was not helpless—He was always in control. He did not have to allow the betrayal. He did not have to yield to His captors. He understood His responsibility to “drink the cup” the Father had given. (John 18:11)



# WHO IS JESUS?



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How did God use me to sow the seed last week?

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# Week 11

## **Monday: John 18:12-27; Luke 22:54-62**

While Jesus boldly and humbly defends His identity as the Messiah before Israel's spiritual elite, Peter attempts to huddle anonymously among the commoners. The stark contrast is a deliberate move. Luke 22 tells us more about Peter's trio of intensifying denials which, upon reaching a fever pitch of vigor and vulgarity, culminates in the haunting crows of a rooster. "And the Lord turned and looked at Peter," Luke 22:61 records. A devastating blow. But praise the Lord this devastating denial of Jesus is not the end of Peter's story!

## **Tuesday: John 18:28-38**

After Jesus appeared before the religious leaders, He was sent to Pilate, the Roman governor. Though Jesus defended His kingship (a dangerous admission before a representative of Caesar), Pilate was moved by Jesus' words. But it was too risky for Pilate to defend Jesus's innocence. Pilate's greatest mistake, however, was deciding to become agnostic to the truth. (18:38) And in doing so, he set himself against Truth Himself—a choice with devastating, eternal consequences.

## **Wednesday: John 18:39-19:16**

Pilate had found no basis for the charges brought against Jesus, but he would not sacrifice his political ambitions for the sake of some Jew. He attempts to exchange the life of Jesus for the life of a criminal—a man named Barabbas. Barabbas is aptly-named. His name means "son of the father." As Barabbas stands next to The Son of The Father on that Passover weekend, it is Jesus Who is chosen as the spotless Passover Lamb. [Scripture for Meditation: Exodus 12:12-14, 23; John 1:29, 36]

**Thursday: John 19:17-27; Luke 23:32-43**

While Jesus is on the cross, we see a wide range of reactions. Some of the bystanders even change their opinion of Jesus during His hours on the cross. At the time, the prevailing response was negative and even hateful. But opinions cannot alter the truth of the work accomplished on that cross. The same is true of people today. Your opinion of Jesus is irrelevant to the truth of the cross. Only one response leads to eternal life—repent and believe! (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:1-8; 6:23)

**Friday: John 19:28-42**

“It is finished.” (19:30) Found only in the Gospel of John, the Greek word translated “it is finished” is an accounting term meaning “paid in full.” When Jesus uttered those words, He was declaring the debt owed to His Father had been paid. This was our debt, not His. Yet, through perfect obedience to the Father, Jesus paid the debt of love we owed (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and our debt of sin. (Romans 3:23-25)



# WHO IS JESUS?



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# Week 12

## **Monday: John 20:1-18**

Early Sunday morning, some of Jesus's friends set out for His grave to anoint the body of their friend and teacher. But when they arrive, the tomb is empty and Jesus is gone! HE IS RISEN! Now, resurrection was not immediately apparent to everyone (20:9-13), but Jesus was quick to prove His claims that He is "the resurrection and the life." (11:25) The resurrection story becomes the first "creed" of the early church, as the Apostle Paul outlines in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

## **Tuesday: Luke 24:13-35**

As we drop in on the Easter story in Luke 24, we see the distress and the depression that has befallen Jesus' friends. They are disgraced, discouraged, and afraid. They are so fragmented that Luke 24:11 tells us the initial report of an empty tomb was considered "nonsense" by most of Jesus' followers. With no living Savior immediately evident, they were an Easter Sunday people still living the realities of Good Friday. But Jesus sets the record straight with the first Easter Sunday sermon. (24:25-27) While we do not know the exact content of that sermon through the Old Testament, here are a few texts Jesus may have used as He "explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself." (24:27) [Scripture for Meditation: Genesis 3:15; Numbers 21:9; Deuteronomy 18:15; Isaiah 7:14; Ezekiel 34:23; Malachi 3:1]



**Wednesday: John 20:19-31**

Though Jesus seems to revel in the repetitive revelation of His resurrection, He did not rise midday with a chorus of angels or a triumphant blast of war-horns. He did not retrace His steps down Main Street Jerusalem or kick in the doors of the Temple to dramatically reveal Himself to His executioners before spiring away through a wall. He did not even try to draw a crowd. He just found His friends struggling with their sorrow, and helped them believe. And He does the same for us, just as John recounts, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” (20:31)

**Thursday: John 21:1-19**

John could have easily ended his Gospel with 20:31. It is an incredible concluding statement and call to action! But he included one more chapter to help us see the completion of Peter’s story which was left on a cliffhanger of humiliating unfaithfulness in chapter 18. This final appearance of Jesus also reminds the disciples of their primary mission, bringing their learning under Rabbi Jesus full circle. This scene gives us incredible insight into Jesus’ expectations of His disciples. He calls all His disciples to a life full of loving, forgiving, and spiritually nourishing the people God puts in our path. If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, who has God placed in your path today?

**Friday: John 21:15-25**

Peter’s first response to Jesus’ personal challenge was to deflect and ask what Jesus wanted someone else to do. Peter represents most of us. We find it easy to deflect any personal challenge from Jesus by wondering about what other disciples are doing or what Jesus may require from them. But Jesus’ response to Peter is the same for all of us, “What is that to you? You follow Me.” (21:22) John only briefly outlines a version of Jesus’ corporate “Great Commission” (see 20:21) choosing to emphasize the personal responsibility of each disciple to follow Jesus and reach the lost. And just as John concludes, there is always more that can be said about Jesus (21:25), so each of us has a responsibility to tell the story!

# THE FINISHER

WEEK 12 | JOHN 19:28-30



Sermon Notes (What does the Bible say?):

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How did God use me to sow the seed last week?

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# WHO IS JESUS?



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# THE RESTORER

JOHN 21:15-19



Sermon Notes (What does the Bible say?):

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How did God use me to sow the seed last week?

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