

EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

COLLEGIATE EDITION



JOHN'S GOSPEL ONE WORD, ONE LIFE, ONE WAY (JOHN 1–11)

WHAT'S INSIDE ... FALL 2013

The goal of the *Collegiate's Explore the Bible®* online features is to bring you a structured teaching plan with additional helps and relevant questions to equip you to lead a strong discussion-based lesson. As always, we're here for you. Please send us your questions, thoughts, and suggestions. Let us know how we can better serve you and your group.

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MEET THE WRITERS

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GOD REVEALED

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 1

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Is it easier to show appreciation to Jesus or people we admire?

Who do you wind up spending more time talking about: Jesus or people you admire?

1. RECOGNIZE THE WORD

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:1-5.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. 4 Life was in Him, and that life was the light of men. 5 That light shines in the darkness, yet the darkness did not overcome it.

After reading verses 1-5, ask a volunteer to also read Genesis 1:1.

In what ways do these two passages compliment each another?

Why do you think John began with this instead of retelling Jesus' birth?

Have another volunteer read Proverbs 18:21 and John 6:63.

What are some powerful words that have been spoken into your life?

2. WELCOME THE LIGHT

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:9-14.

9 The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was created through Him, yet the world did not recognize Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. 12 But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God. 14 The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Salvation isn't about being born into a family that believes, doing good works, or any action we take. While it might be easy to classify everyone as "God's children" (meaning we came from God), not all are "children of God" (meaning we've been given the authority to be His through our repentance and forgiveness of sins).

Have you ever received a gift and then later realized you forgot to say thanks?

Why do some people find it so hard to recognize the light and authority of Jesus?

BACKGROUND

John used the Old Testament concept of God's dynamic Word to introduce Jesus. The dynamic Word brings life to people as a bright light shining in the darkness. This light has the capacity to enlighten spiritually by giving light to all who believe and welcome Him into their lives. Just as John the Baptist witnessed to Jesus (1:6-8,15), we need to share Jesus with others today. In this way, God can be revealed to and welcomed by another generation. God's full grace and truth was revealed to people through Jesus Christ. We experience His revelation as we learn more about Jesus.

1. RECOGNIZE THE WORD (JOHN 1:1-5)

Verse 1: John lived in a Greek city in Ephesus, but he had grown up with a Jewish background in the areas of Galilee and Judea. As he sought to tell his story of Jesus, he was faced with the problem of how best to talk about the Lord in a meaningful way for both Jews and Gentiles. He began his Gospel with words from Genesis familiar to all Jews, *In the beginning*. He then employed the term *Word* or *Logos*, a common term in Greek circles. For the Greeks, *logos* referred to the organizing principle of logic or reason ordering the universe. For the Jews, *word* referred to the dynamic word of God. God spoke, and things happened. In Genesis, when God said, "Let there be light." There was light. John stated *the Word was with God* referring to co-existence and eternity. He then equated the Word to God. Though the name *Jesus* does not occur until 1:17, John established from the outset Jesus was God.

Verse 2: John states again the fact the Word or *Logos* was with God in the beginning. John referred to the Logos with the masculine form of the pronoun *He*, indicating a person was in view, not a non-living force. With God emphasizes a difference between the Word (Jesus the Son) and God (the Father). John stated this truth in verses 1 and 2 because his Gospel would focus on Jesus in His distinct role as the One sent by the Father to point the way to the Father. The phrase *in the beginning*, while mirroring the opening of Genesis, actually refers to a time preceding creation. As the divine Logos, Jesus existed before creation.

Verse 3: Having established that Jesus was God and was with the Father in eternity, John turned his attention to creation. Jesus was God's agent as He created the light, the firmament, the seas and dry land, animals, and people in the Genesis account. Jesus' agency is indicated by the words *through Him*. The phrase *all things* indicates the full scope of creation came into existence through Him, through Jesus. The opposite side of the same coin is stated in negative fashion. *Apart from Him not one thing was created* indicates every creature's full dependency on Jesus for life.

The phrase *not one thing* excludes any chance people or things came into existence without Jesus' direct involvement. This total dependence of all creatures upon Jesus for life is crucial for understanding the importance of Jesus' mission as the One sent from above to reveal God.

Verse 4: John used the term *life* for the first time in this Gospel. The Greek term *zoē* refers to both physical and spiritual life. John takes advantage of both usages throughout his Gospel. The theme of eternal life is one of the most important themes in John, paralleling the emphasis of the Synoptic Gospels on the Kingdom of God or Heaven. The term *life* occurs two times in this verse and 47 times in John's Gospel in the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

The reader is alerted to keep both the physical and the spiritual usages of life in mind when reading the Gospel. When John wrote *in Him was life*, he meant physical life, tying the statement to the previous verse on creation. He also meant spiritual life, as the rest of the Gospel will spell out for us. The spiritual sense of *life* seems to be in view in the statement *that life* was the light of all mankind.

Verse 5: The term *light*, appearing first in the previous verse and used again here, refers

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to Jesus. Like *life*, *light* is an important theme in John. Jesus identified Himself as the Light of the World (8:12). In John's way of presenting Jesus, the concept of light stands in sharp contrast to darkness and night. Darkness represents evil and the cover for evil deeds (3:19). When Judas betrayed Jesus, John said, "And it was night."

John used the present tense of the Greek verb "to shine" meaning the light "shines" or "continually shines." Jesus the Light is shining as brightly in the twenty-first century as when John wrote in the first century. The phrase *in the darkness* metaphorically described the incarnation, when Jesus came into this world of sin. Though darkness, or sinful people, always tries, darkness cannot overcome the light. The term *overcome* effectively meant "to extinguish the light."

2. WELCOME THE LIGHT (JOHN 1:9-14)

Verse 9: Jesus is the true light. John used the word *true* throughout his Gospel, basing his usage on the Hebrew concept of faithfulness and dependability. As such, Jesus is also the "true vine" (15:1) and His Father is the "true God" (17:3).

John referred to the incarnation by saying the true light was coming into the world (cosmos). John used the term *world* in this verse to refer to the home of humans over against God's home above. Later in the Gospel, *world* refers to sinful people who rejected Jesus.

The true light, Jesus, gives light to everyone. To "give light" refers to spiritual enlightenment in this context. Jesus is uniquely qualified to open our eyes to God's realities. Our minds are empowered to see spiritual things, notably our sin and God's love. The reference to *everyone* indicates the scope of God's love, but unfortunately not the scope of people's acceptance of Jesus. God loves all people and sends Jesus to enlighten everyone, but not everyone believes in Jesus. Many people reject Him. For this reason, no doctrine of universal salvation can found here.

Verse 10: The term *world* appears three times in this verse to emphasize the realm where people live and to emphasize those people as the object of God's love and Jesus' mission. Jesus was in the very world He created. The transcendent God walked around as a person who could be heard, seen, and touched (1 John 1:1), but *the world*, people, did not recognize Him. The term *recognize* derives from the Greek verb "to know." At this point, John merely stated the fact of human failure to grasp the significance of Jesus' coming into the world. Some people failed to recognize Him due to their preconceived notions of Messiah, which had to be overcome. Others failed to recognize Him out of sheer obstinacy.

Verse 11: The idea of rejection comes to the fore as John recorded the response of Jesus' own people to His mission. The term *own* appears twice in this verse, but in different genders in Greek. The first occurrence of *own* is Neuter tense and refers to land, country, or creation; the second occurrence of *own* is Masculine and refers to the Jewish people. In effect, John was saying Jesus came to His own lands and territories, and His own people did not receive Him. This simple statement served to foreshadow much of what John wrote later in his Gospel. The Jewish people, in particular their leaders, rejected Jesus as the Messiah. John was describing what he observed as an eyewitness during the time of Jesus' ministry and perhaps also during the time when he wrote the Gospel six decades later.

Verse 12: To avoid the impression that everyone rejected Jesus, John quickly focused on those who accepted Him. The phrases *to all who did receive Him* and *to those who believe in His name* are virtually synonymous. To receive Jesus is to believe in His name or to welcome His revelation. Thus, those who received Jesus made a commitment to go on believing in His name.

Verse 13: This verse makes clear spiritual birth or salvation is of God, not a result of biological action, being born of blood, or bloodline relations. Nor is spiritual birth a matter of the will of the flesh, a reference to healthy sexual desires. Finally, spiritual birth is not a matter of the will of man, a probable reference to a husband's desire to have offspring. The Greek term for *man* also can mean "husband." By eliminating every human avenue for obtaining spiritual birth, John turned the focus on God as the single source of new life.

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Verse 14: John reintroduced the concept of the eternal *Word* or *Logos*. The Word became flesh, used here in a neutral sense to refer to becoming a human being. In 1:2, the pronoun *He* indicated John had a person in mind as the Logos. In the present verse, John was more explicit. The eternal Word, who was with God and who was God, became a person and took up residence among us. This latter phrase renders the Greek verb meaning “to pitch a tent” or “to dwell.” The impact of John’s statement in common language would be something like, “the Word became a living, breathing person and moved in next door to us.” The transcendent God drew near to people.

The Living Word came near enough to view. Thus John wrote, *we observed His glory*. John’s Hebrew background informed his use of the term *glory*. The term refers to “the honor of God” as revealed in Christ. The phrase *One and Only Son* renders the Greek term *monogenes*, meaning “unique” or “one-of-a-kind.” The term *Son* is added to differentiate the incarnate Word from the Father. This unique Son was full of grace and truth. Though John does not use the word *grace* beyond 1:17, he demonstrates its meaning through the ministry of Jesus throughout the Gospel. The term *truth* is based on the Hebrew concept of faithfulness.

3. EXPERIENCE THE REVELATION (JOHN 1:16-18)

Verse 16: After briefly mentioning John the Baptist’s witness to Jesus (1:15), John again focused on Jesus. By using the plural *we*, John might have had his Church family or all Christians in mind. Surely all Christians have received grace after grace. The Greek construction is difficult, but probably refers to a repetitious pouring out of gracious acts one after the other, like the unending line of waves sweeping the seashore. These repeated acts of grace come from His fullness. Writing some 60 years after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, John had never lacked God’s gracious provisions through Christ. Jesus made God’s fullness possible, similar to Isaiah’s experience of God’s fullness (Isaiah 6:1-4).

Verse 17: At last John mentioned Jesus by name and title, Jesus Christ. However, he first mentioned Moses. The intent was not to belittle Moses so much as to portray him as an early wave of grace, being followed by the fuller wave of grace in Jesus. The Law was given through Moses, indicating he was the agent of the Law. *The Law* refers canonically to the first five books of the Bible; figuratively to the Old Testament or any part thereof; and sometimes specifically to the Ten Commandments or other portions of the first five books. John sought to praise Moses as “the Law giver” as far as that goes, but clearly the Law is incomplete without the grace and truth that came through Jesus, the agent or “guarantee of a better covenant” (Hebrews 7:22).

Verse 18: Because no one has ever seen God or could even hope to see Him, He took the initiative to reveal Himself through Jesus. Jesus alone reveals God to us. He is identified by two characteristics. First, He is the One and Only Son, rendering the same Greek term *monogenes* found in 1:14. The word *Son* is used for clarification. In some Greek manuscripts the word *God* appears instead of *Son*. Both God and Son define Jesus; He is unique as “God” and as “the Son.”

Second, Jesus is characterized as being at the Father’s side. The idea is of presence and proximity. Jesus is perfectly suited and immanently qualified to reveal the Father to the world. Thus, John declared, He (Jesus) has revealed Him (the Father). The verb rendered *revealed* is the same Greek term from which we get our word *exegete*. Every pastor has to exegete his passage before preaching his sermon on Sunday. To *exegete* means “to study,” “to explain,” or “to make plain.” We can know the God we’ve never seen because Jesus has revealed Him to us.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have you ever been mistaken for or told you resembled someone famous?

Have you ever tried to pass yourself off — either online or in real life — as being able to do something you can't or as someone other than yourself?

1. LAMB OF GOD

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:29-36.

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" **30** This is the One I told you about: 'After me comes a man who has surpassed me, because He existed before me.' **31** I didn't know Him, but I came baptizing with water so He might be revealed to Israel." **32** And John testified, "I watched the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He rested on Him." **33** I didn't know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The One you see the Spirit descending and resting on — He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' **34** I have seen and testified that He is the Son of God!" **35** Again the next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. **36** When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look! The Lamb of God!"

John the Baptist already had a following by this point. Yet even though he was well-known (infamous, at least), he still used his ministry to point others to Christ, not himself.

Do you praise the deeds of others more or make sure the good you've done is acknowledged?

Do you find it easier to forgive others or yourself?

Do you find it easier to believe that Jesus forgives your sins or forgets them?

2. MESSIAH

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:40-42A, 45-46.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed Him. **41** He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah!" (which means "Anointed One"), **42a** and he brought Simon to Jesus.

45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth!" **46** "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael asked him. "Come and see," Philip answered.

When was the last time a friend failed to follow through on a promise they made to you? Did that make you more or less likely to depend on them in the future?

Think back on the recent "prophecies" about disaster (the Mayan Apocalypse; Y2K). When they didn't come true, were you at all surprised? Why or why not?

JESUS IDENTIFIED

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 8

How do these false prophecies relate to your view of God's promises?

Do you truly believe them or do you think they're relevant?

3. RABBI

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:47-51.

47 Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said about him, "Here is a true Israelite; no deceit is in him." 48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you," Jesus answered. 49 "Rabbi," Nathanael replied, "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus responded to him, "Do you believe only because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." 51 Then He said, "I assure you: You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

When was the last time a friend confronted you over something you thought no one knew anything about?

How do you feel about God seeing you and knowing everything you do and say?

Have a volunteer read Romans 8:38-39.

Although we live with this promise in the Word, describe times when you feel disconnected from God?

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Have the students in your group share a little bit of what they may know about their surname or family history. (As an example, take some time to research the origin of your own last name before the lesson).

How does your knowledge of your family or your name define you as a person?

If you have a negative history, what steps can you take not to be defined by your past?

OPTION 2:

Ask your students to think about someplace in the outdoors they have a positive connection to — maybe places they've hiked, canoed, or gone on family vacations to.

What is it that you enjoy and anticipate about returning to that place?

How could this analogy be used to describe the ways we can point others to Christ?

BACKGROUND

On the first day of a four day sequence, John the Baptist denied He was the Messiah, Elijah, or the Prophet foretold by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15,18). Rather, he was the prophetic voice crying in the wilderness (Isaiah 40:3), testifying about Jesus.

On the second day of the four day sequence, John identified Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). We can be forgiven because of Him.

On day three and four of the four day sequence, Jesus gained His first disciples: Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and an unnamed disciple. They believed Jesus was the Promised One of God. In response to Nathanael’s adoration of Jesus, the Lord promised His disciples they would see “heaven opened.”

1. LAMB OF GOD (JOHN 1:29-36)

Verse 29: John the Baptist was a relative of Jesus according to Luke 1:36. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, the Fourth Gospel does not explicitly mention the baptism of Jesus, though Jesus’ coming toward John might suggest the occasion. John the Baptist identified Jesus by the important title *the Lamb of God*. Lambs were central to the religious life of the Jews. Primary associations included the protection and deliverance secured by the Passover lamb and the atonement for sins proffered by sacrificial lambs (Isaiah 53:7; Jeremiah 11:19).

John the Baptist capitalized on both associations by referring to Jesus as *the Lamb of God*. First, John had the Passover motif in mind as he recounted the story of Jesus, mentioning at least three Passovers (2:13; 6:4; 19:14). Second, John identified Jesus as *the Lamb of God*, the one who takes away the sin of the world. This concept of atonement, or forgiveness, was embedded in the sacrificial lamb rituals. Thus the Passover lamb secured deliverance and the sacrificial lamb secured forgiveness. John the Baptist proclaimed both deliverance and forgiveness was to be found in Jesus. As *the Lamb of God* who sacrificed Himself, Jesus makes possible the forgiveness of sin.

Verse 30: Characteristic of John’s Gospel, John the Baptist was identified in an important, but supportive role to the ministry of Jesus (1:6-8,15; 3:22-36; 10:40-41). Thus, John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus has surpassed him and existed before him. Jesus *surpassed* John in terms of the essential nature of Christ’s redemptive ministry. John’s ministry could only point people to the saving work of Jesus. That Jesus *existed before* John recalls the eternity of Jesus established in Prologue (1:1).

Verse 31: Readers are astonished by John the Baptist’s statement *I didn’t know Him*, since John was Jesus’ relative (Luke 1:36). However, in context John’s statement referred specifically to Jesus in His role as “the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit” (1:33). Thus, John no doubt knew Jesus the man, but had to be shown his relative was so much more in God’s redemptive plan. John came baptizing with water, a precursor to Jesus’ baptizing with the Holy Spirit. The Greek term for *baptizing* means “to dip” or “to immerse.” The term serves as the foundation for the Baptist practice of baptism by full-immersion, instead of sprinkling. The purpose of John’s ministry was so Jesus might be revealed or made known. The final phrase *to Israel* should not be taken in a restrictive way, inferring Jesus only came to save Jews. Rather, the phrase refers to Jesus’ primary ministry of convincing His own people God’s Savior had come. Jesus’ ministry did indeed touch non-Jews (Matthew 15:21-28).

Verse 32: John recorded a simple observation, a sign sent from God. The Spirit, or Holy Spirit, was compared to a dove. More importantly, the Spirit was descending from heaven, indicating the Spirit’s source. The Spirit also rested on Him, on Jesus. Thus, the Spirit descended from God in Heaven and lighted upon Jesus, God in the world. The entire Trinity was involved in the mission of Jesus. The author of the Fourth Gospel makes

COMMENTARY

much of the world “above” and this world below (3:31; 8:23; 19:11).

Verse 33: John tied the dove sign to God’s identification of Jesus by repeating his statement *I didn’t know Him* (1:31,33). John’s commission to baptize was “from God” (1:6). Thus the One who sent John to baptize with water also told him the meaning of the sign. Through the Spirit descending like a dove and resting on Jesus, John came to know Jesus in a new and deeper way, as the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Verse 34: John referred to Jesus by another important title. Not only is Jesus *the Lamb of God*, He is also *the Son of God*. Two activities of John are highlighted. First, he had seen Jesus. The theme of *seeing* is prominent in John’s Gospel, especially in John 9. The verb confirms John the Baptist as an eyewitness to Jesus’ early ministry. Second, John testified about Jesus and for Jesus. The Greek verb rendered *testified* is *martureo*, meaning “to bear witness.” In an aural culture, where most people could not read or write, the verbal testimony of an eyewitness was valued highly. Many early Christians were put to death because they verbally testified about Jesus. Thus, the Greek verb *martureo*, came to be transliterated into English as “martyr.” The original meaning of “to witness” or “to testify” is often lost or subjugated to the idea of dying. True martyrs are those who witness for Jesus whether doing so costs them their lives or not.

Verse 35: The phrase *the next day* occurs three times in John 1:19-51. The phrase marks off the action into four days of transitioning from the focus on John the Baptist’s ministry to the ministry of Jesus (1:29,35,43). We are told that John the Baptist had disciples. Some scholars believe the Fourth Gospel was written to address a problem whereby some viewed John the Baptist as being equal to or greater than Jesus. In Ephesus, Paul encountered 12 men who experienced John’s baptism (Acts 19:1-7). Most scholars believe the Gospel was written in Ephesus and might reflect the existence of a band of followers of the Baptist that rivaled the church. If such was the case, the Gospel of John set the record straight with John testifying of Jesus’ superiority (1:30). In John’s Gospel, the Baptist always plays an important but inferior role to Jesus. The word *again* modifies *the next day*, reminding us of what John said the day before (1:29).

Verse 36: For the second time and on consecutive days, John identified Jesus as *the Lamb of God*. This second occurrence was for the specific benefit of his two disciples (1:35). The phrase *passing by* renders the Greek word for “walking around.” The command to *look*, rendered as “here” in 1:29, derives from a Greek verb meaning “to see.” The word is a particle used to call attention to someone or something important and occurs 19 times in the Greek text of John.

2. MESSIAH (JOHN 1:40-42A, 45-46)

Verse 40: Andrew is identified as one of two previously unnamed disciples of John (1:35). In the Synoptic Gospels, Andrew plays a minor role, is identified as Peter’s brother, and occurs mainly in lists of disciples. In John, Andrew factors prominently in three stories: bringing his brother Simon to Jesus (1:40-42), bringing the boy with two fish and five loaves to Jesus (6:8), and informing Jesus of the approach of the Greeks (12:22).

Verse 41: Andrew was singled out because He first found his own brother Simon. Jesus nicknamed him, “Cephas,” Aramaic for rock (1:42b). The Greek equivalent is *Petros*, from which we get *Peter*. Frequently, he is called Simon Peter, but never Cephas, through the remainder of the Gospel.

Andrew brought his brother because he was convinced Jesus was the Messiah, the Promised One from God. The verb *found* is in the perfect tense, meaning the action was complete and had lasting results. In effect, Andrew was saying, “No one needs look any further, We have found the Messiah and as a result we will always know who He is. His name is Jesus.” The author’s need to translate the Aramaic term *Messiah* as *the Anointed One*, indicates some non-Jewish people were part of his audience. The Greek equivalent of *Messiah*, or *Anointed One*, is Christ.

Verse 42a: He (Andrew) brought Simon to Jesus. The verb *brought* renders the Greek verb meaning “to lead.” Over the centuries pastors have encouraged worshipers to lead people to Jesus, just as Andrew did.

Verse 45: In a similar fashion, Philip found his friend Nathanael. Interestingly, in John’s

Gospel, Philip was the first person Jesus told to “follow me” (1:43). The verb *found* figures prominently in these verses: Andrew found Peter, proclaiming, “We have found the Messiah” (1:41); Jesus found Philip (1:43); and Philip found Nathanael, proclaiming, “We have found the One Moses wrote about...” (1:45).

Philip’s profession identified Jesus as *the One* God had promised through Moses and the prophets. Jesus was known as the son of Joseph, a man from Nazareth. Just as John the Baptist knew Jesus the man, but had to be shown Jesus as *the One* who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33), Philip’s understanding of Jesus as *the One* promised through Moses and the prophets came only after Jesus found him (1:43). Nazareth was a small town located about four miles south of Sepphoris, the capital of Galilee during Jesus’ boyhood. Thus, the most important person to ever walk the planet came from one of the least important villages of Galilee. First century Jews often referred to their Scripture as “the Law and the Prophets.”

Verse 46: Nathanael’s question, *Can anything good come out of Nazareth*, underscores the relatively unimportant status of Nazareth among the small villages of Galilee. Philip’s response to Nathanael was essentially the same as Jesus’ response to the two disciples of John the Baptist (1:39), *Come and see*. Interestingly, Jesus’ first two signs in John were conducted in another small, insignificant Galilean village, Cana, the hometown of Nathanael (2:11; 4:46-54; 21:2). As a small town boy, Nathanael might have had difficulty processing how God could fulfill His promise through another small town boy.

3. RABBI (JOHN 1:47-51)

Verse 47: Across the centuries many Christians have been guilty of anti-Semitism, often resulting in violence against the Jews. They have mistaken John’s rebuke of unbelieving Jewish leaders of the first century as a general rebuke of all Jews of all time. This verse is an important corrective. Jesus identified Nathanael as a true Israelite having no deceit in him. Jesus was Jewish; His disciples were Jewish. His assessment of Nathanael as a true Israelite could not have been higher. Though Nathanael had questioned whether anything good could come out of Nazareth, he was still a devout Jew. The term *deceit* means “cunning” or “treachery.” Nathanael means “God’s gift.”

Verse 48: Nathanael was curious as to how Jesus knew Him. Of course, the readers have been alerted from the Prologue that Jesus is God, but Nathanael did not have that information yet. The phrase *before Philip called you* serves to clarify that Jesus did not hear about Nathanael’s name or character from Philip. Rather, Jesus had observed Nathanael under the fig tree. Apparently, Jewish custom was for rabbis or serious students of the Scripture to study under a vine, fig tree, or olive tree. Thus, the unassuming phrase *under the fig tree* possibly indicated Nathanael was a serious student of Scripture. The context certainly supports this view. Jesus’ statement, *I saw you*, utilized a verb used frequently in John to stress the importance of seeing. Yet, by the end of the Gospel and for the benefit of later generations of believers, the higher blessing is reserved for those who believe in Jesus even though they could not see Him. (20:29).

Verse 49: Nathanael heard in Jesus’ response the wisdom of a great teacher. So he addressed Him as *Rabbi*. This term occurred first in John 1:39 when John the Baptist’s two disciples first addressed Jesus. In that verse, *rabbi* was interpreted as “teacher.” That Nathanael viewed Jesus as a teacher indicates he saw the Lord as “the One” who could instruct him about God. He also confessed Jesus as both *the Son of God* and as *the King of Israel*. All the while God was working His plan through Jesus, even on the cross.

Verse 50: Jesus, first impressed with Nathanael because of his piety, expressed pleasure in his ability to grasp His true identity quickly. Just as Jesus knew who Nathanael was, Nathanael knew who Jesus was. The idea that Nathanael could recognize Jesus as Rabbi, Son of God, and King of Israel, and believe in Him, is astounding. Yet, we should not be surprised when God reveals Himself, nor when a person, attuned to seeking God, recognizes Him. The verb *believe* occurs for the first time in this verse outside the Prologue (1:7,12). *Believe* is an important word in John, occurring 98 times, in 18 of the 21 chapters, in the Greek text. By far, John’s Gospel is more saturated with the term *believe* than the next five New Testament books combined. Jesus’ promise *You will see greater things than*



AUTHORITY ACKNOWLEDGED

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 15

WHAT YOU NEED

- > This week’s lesson on pages 8-9 of *Collegiate’s* Fall 2013 *Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert
- > Refer to “Consider This” on page 8 of *Collegiate’s* Fall 2013 *Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert for a supplemental element to enhance your lesson.

HIGHLIGHTS

This lesson describes Jesus’ turning water into wine and cleansing the temple. Its emphasis is on Jesus’ authority as revealed to Mary, the disciples, and those in the temple. The lesson encourages college students to submit fully to Jesus’ authority.

SCRIPTURE

John 2:1-16

GETTING STARTED

Have everyone stand in a circle. Ask each person to look around the circle and choose someone as their leader but to keep their choice a secret. Next, ask everyone to think of a pose to make. On the count of three, each person first strikes their pose, then looks at their leader and does whatever their leader is doing for the rest of the exercise. End the exercise when the entire group is doing the same movement or is in the same pose. If this does not happen, end the exercise when group members stop switching poses.

Discuss leadership patterns in the group by looking at who chose whom to be their leader and whom everyone was following at the end.

How did you decide whom to choose as a leader?

How did your strategies relate to how you choose leaders in life, whether role models, mentors, or politicians?

Did anyone change their mind at the last second and decide to follow someone else? Why?

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WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 15

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1. OBEY JESUS

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:1-5.

1 On the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and 2 Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding as well. 3 When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother told Him, "They don't have any wine." 4 "What has this concern of yours to do with Me, woman?" Jesus asked. "My hour has not yet come." 5 "Do whatever He tells you," His mother told the servants.

Whose authority do you feel you don't have to submit to fully? Why?

What is a time when you followed the spirit of the law instead of the letter of the law?

When discussing our reluctance to submit to authority, parents or guardians come to mind first. Encourage students to think outside their automatic responses and consider other individuals over them: law enforcement, Resident Assistants, professors, and others.

Describe a time when you followed the rules reluctantly and with a slight grudge in your heart.

Explain the difference between submitting to the rules and obeying the rules.

2. GROW IN FAITH

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:6-11.

6 Now six stone water jars had been set there for Jewish purification. Each contained 20 or 30 gallons. 7 "Fill the jars with water," Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim. 8 Then He said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the chief servant." And they did. 9 When the chief servant tasted the water (after it had become wine), he did not know where it came from — though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom 10 and told him, "Everyone sets out the fine wine first, then, after people have drunk freely, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now." 11 Jesus performed this first sign in Cana of Galilee. He displayed His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

What is a time when you willingly followed instructions, no matter how out of the ordinary they were? How did you feel about the end result?

Think of some individuals you look up to. Was there ever a time when you didn't trust them as much as you do now? What changed?

3. MAKE GENUINE WORSHIP

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 2:12-16.

12 After this, He went down to Capernaum, together with His mother, His brothers, and His

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disciples, and they stayed there only a few days. **13** The Jewish Passover was near, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. **14** In the temple complex He found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and He also found the money changers sitting there. **15** After making a whip out of cords, He drove everyone out of the temple complex with their sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables. **16** He told those who were selling doves, "Get these things out of here! Stop turning My Father's house into a marketplace!"

What made the cleansing of the temple significant to the Jewish people and controversial to the Pharisees was that it signified Jesus had the authority to do so.

When was a time a friend corrected you? How about a total stranger? Whose advice did you listen to more closely? Why?

Are there things that happen in your life that you feel are hindrances to you being able to genuinely connect with God?

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Have your students go over the brief list at the end of the "Grow in Faith" section on page 8 of their pull-out insert. Ask them which of the actions listed brings them closer to God or they consider an act of worship.

What would you add to the list? Which ones do you need to add to your daily walk?

Which ones seem most outside your comfort level? Why?

OPTION 2:

As a group, brainstorm some practical ways to humbly serve others throughout the week. In doing so, think of how these actions can be used to glorify and worship God. Challenge students to think outside the box.

PRAY

Ask God to help you obstacles keeping you from true, genuine worship. Lift up those in authority over your life, asking for wisdom and strength to be leaders with integrity.

NEXT WEEK

- > Read next week's lesson, "Salvation Offered," on pages 10-11 of *Collegiate's* Fall 2013 *Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert.
- > Gather index cards and pens for each member of the group.

BACKGROUND

Mary instructed the servants to do whatever Jesus told them to do. Her simple words provided a profound approach to life. By turning water into wine, Jesus displayed His glory. As a result His disciples began to believe in Him. True worship is about communion with God. Unfortunately, temple authorities had allowed money changers and animal handlers to set up shop in the courtyard ostensibly reserved for Gentile prayers. By trying to make worship more convenient for the Jews, the authorities hindered worship for the Gentiles.

1. OBEY JESUS (JOHN 2:1-5)

Verse 1: Cana of Galilee was a small town located about eight miles north of Nazareth. Jesus performed two miracles there to reveal His identity: the water-to-wine miracle (2:1-11) and the healing of the nobleman's son (4:46-54). Cana is mentioned again only in 21:2, as Nathanael's hometown. Did Jesus choose to perform two significant signs in Cana in response to Nathanael's question, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (1:46).

The third day has received much attention from scholars of John. Some scholars take the phrase as referring to the time Jesus and his disciples took to travel from Judea into Galilee to Cana. Others see in *the third day* a reference to a post-resurrection perspective. Still others note that the Jews numbered rather than named the weekdays. In this reckoning, *the third day* would be equated to Tuesday of our week. The main emphasis was upon a wedding.

John indicated Jesus' mother was there. We know Jesus' mother by the name Mary from the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, but John never mentioned her by name. Only Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus are named. Jesus' mother figured prominently in two stories in John: the wedding in Cana (2:1-5) and in the scene at the cross (19:25-57).

Verse 2: Both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. At this point in the narrative, His disciples consisted of Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and one unnamed disciple. That Jesus and His disciples were invited dispels any notion they just showed up and thus were responsible for the depleted resources of wine. Jesus' family might have been related to the wedding couple. Quite possibly, they were friends of the family.

Verse 3: This verse introduces a crisis and the reaction. First, to run out of wine at a wedding was considered an embarrassing breach of hospitality. Second, Jesus' mother informed Him of the crisis. Possibly, she was in charge of hospitality. A mother asking her adult son for help in a tough situation is not uncommon.

The crisis centered on not having any wine. The Greek term for wine, *oinos*, referred to the juice pressed from grapes. The juice could be unfermented, but more often referred to the fermented variety. The text does not specify why the wedding party did not have any wine. Weddings were considered to be happy occasions and celebrating with wine was their custom.

Verse 4: Jesus' response to His mother seems curt and disrespectful at first glance. Most of us would not address our mothers as *woman*. However, a look at the use of this form of address in John reveals Jesus was not showing disrespect. Jesus similarly addressed other women: the Samaritan woman (4:21), the adulterous woman (8:10), and Mary Magdalene (20:15). He led the first woman to faith; He forgave the second woman; and He revealed His identity to the third. In each case, the woman Jesus addressed received favorable treatment, faring better as a result. Thus, *woman* was a term of endearment.

Jesus responded to His mother's concern with a direct question, *what has this concern of yours to do with me?* The question is even more direct in Greek, "What's this to me and you?" The identical question (in Greek) was asked by Judge Jephthah to the Ammonite king (Judges 11:12), by the Zarephath widow to Elijah (I Kings 17:18), by Elisha to King Joram (2 Kings 3:13), and by the Pharaoh to King Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:21). In each

instance, the common factor was the sense of untimeliness; so also with Jesus.

His main mission was not to bail people out of embarrassing situations due to poor planning. His mission was to reveal the Father, opening access to Him by dying on the cross. Thus He informed His mother, *My hour has not yet come*. This reference to Jesus' hour is the first of several in John. Not until Jesus approached His last Passover did He indicate His hour had come (12:23,27). Thus, the phrase *My hour* referred to Jesus' death on the cross, His resurrection, and His ascension to the Father.

Verse 5: Jesus' mother felt no rebuke by His response. Instead, she directed the servants to *do whatever He tells you*. His mother's instructions revealed conviction Jesus could help and confidence He would act. That was good enough for Mary. Obedience is always a matter of authority. When we acknowledge Jesus' authority, we are inclined to obey His instructions. Our obedience demonstrates our acknowledgement of His authority. Even Jesus' mother submitted to His authority and instructed the servants to do the same.

2. GROW IN FAITH (JOHN 2:6-11)

Verse 6: This passage serves as an interpretive key for the reason John included the water-to-wine sign. The six stone water jars could hold between 120-180 gallons of water, a large amount. The purpose for the jars was for Jewish purification. According to Levitical guidelines, earthen ware pots were subject to contamination, thus stone water jars were preferred (Leviticus 11:33).

Verse 7: Jesus gave concise instructions. His first directive was for the servants to fill the jars with water. In full obedience, the servants filled them to the brim. John wanted his readers to grow in faith; to do so, meant hearing and obeying Jesus' word. Yet, John presented the Jewish leadership of Jesus' day as being insensitive to God's voice and direction. At this point we must picture the six stone jars, filled to the brim with water, as symbols of Jewish purification.

Verse 8: Jesus' second directive was to draw some out and take it to the chief servant. The Greek *architriklinos*, rendered *chief servant*, served as a sort of head of guests services, functioning to keep the guests satisfied. Once again, the servants obeyed Jesus.

Verse 9: When the chief servant tasted the water (after it had become wine), he was astonished. Keep in mind our mental picture, the water from the stone jars was representative of Jewish purification. Such water was often less than clean after many wedding guests had used it. Yet, Jesus turned that water into wine.

The chief servant did not know where it came from, though the servants knew. This reminder confirms his evaluation was based solely on the wine's quality. For the first readers of John's Gospel and for every generation since, believers have come to realize they can enjoy the quality of life Jesus gives without being privy to all He has done and is doing behind-the-scenes.

Verse 10: The chief servant expressed amazement regarding the wine's quality. Fine wine renders the literal Greek for "good wine" and occurs twice in this verse. The inferior wine, of lesser quality and taste, was served after discriminating palates had been sufficiently dulled. The chief servant relayed a custom of serving one's best to company. In this way, the host honored his visitors as valued guests. The provision of inferior wine, after the good wine was depleted, was perfectly acceptable.

However, John's main focus was upon the superiority of Jesus' wine over the fine wine already served. Jesus took water used for purification and transformed it into a wine better than the fine wine the guests had enjoyed. His disciples witnessed this miraculous transformation firsthand. The chief servant's words, *you have kept the fine wine until now*, conveyed surprise and excitement.

Verse 11: John summarized this story with three facts. Fact one, this was the first sign Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. According to 20:30-31, Jesus performed many signs; John selected only a few. Additionally, the signs were intended to help people believe in Jesus and to have life in His name. Fact two, through the sign, Jesus displayed His glory. The word *displayed* means "to manifest" or "to reveal." John was not merely interested in Jesus' ability to change water to wine, but rather, he was interested in Jesus' transformative power. Fact three, His disciples believed in Him. Previously, John

COMMENTARY

informed us these disciples believed Jesus was the Messiah (1:35-51). This sign provided an opportunity for His disciples to grow in faith.

3. MAKE WORSHIP GENUINE (JOHN 2:12-16)

Verse 12: Jesus adopted Capernaum as His ministry headquarters. Capernaum, along with Bethsaida and Chorazin, was where Jesus performed most of His miracles (Matthew 11:20-24). However, in the Fourth Gospel, Capernaum is seldom mentioned. This fishing village on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee was most noted by John as the hometown of the nobleman, whose son Jesus cured (4:46), and as the site of Jesus' "Bread of Life" discourse (6:59).

Accompanying Jesus were His mother, His brothers, and His disciples. His mother appears only in the story of this first sign and in the scene at the cross (19:25-26). His brothers are mentioned for the first time in this verse (hereafter only in 7:3-10). The notable thing about Jesus' brothers was they initially did not believe in Him (7:5). His disciples were presumably still the five mentioned in John 1, though Jesus could have attracted more by this time.

Verse 13: John provided the first of three explicit references to Passover in his Gospel. The first Passover mentioned is in 2:13,23. The second Passover mentioned is in 6:4. The final Passover mentioned is in 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28,39; and 19:14. Clearly John placed the greatest emphasis on the final Passover at which Jesus was crucified.

Like most Jewish males, Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem for the Passover feast in keeping with the demands of the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 16:16). The Passover feast was known also as the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Jerusalem was the city God had chosen as the place to make His name dwell. So Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is approximately 2600 feet above sea level, meaning approach from any direction is an uphill climb. However, the phrase *went up to Jerusalem* indicated more than mere physical altitude. Jerusalem was the site of the Lord's temple, the center of the world as far as the Jews were concerned. When one went up to Jerusalem, one went up to meet God.

Verse 14: Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple complex. The Greek word *hieros* referred to the temple mount and the various courtyards where people prayed. Instead of finding people praying, Jesus found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves. The place of prayer needed the transforming touch Jesus had applied earlier to the water in the stone jars. In this instance, the temple complex symbolized an impotent Judaism, out of touch with God. The animals were to be used for sacrifices. The sellers were providing a convenient service to their Jewish pilgrims who had traveled far to participate in Passover.

Verse 15: Jesus responded with two authoritative actions. First, He made a whip out of cords and He drove out both people and animals from the temple complex. Second, He poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables. Some scholars refer to this incident as Jesus cleansing the temple; others refer to it as Jesus judging the temple.

Verse 16: Jesus merely spoke to those who were selling doves. We are reminded that even Jesus' parents offered up two doves at this same temple when Jesus was just eight days old (Luke 2:24). Whether Jesus treated them differently or not, the result was the same. He emptied the temple complex of people, along with their animals and birds, because they were using it as a marketplace not as a house of worship. The term *marketplace* renders the Greek term *emporion*, from which the English word "Emporium" derives. Jesus wanted the temple to be a place of prayer and genuine worship not of merchandising and money changing.

SALVATION OFFERED

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 22

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

We've all had that moment when, after wrestling with a topic of study, suddenly everything becomes clear.

What is a time when you experienced this type of "aha" moment? What did it lead to in terms of deeper understanding of the topic?

1. ARE YOU INTERESTED?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:1-3.

1 There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Him at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher, for no one could perform these signs You do unless God were with him." 3 Jesus replied, "I assure you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

In verse 2, Nicodemus stated "we know," which we can infer to mean that even though the Pharisees may not have liked Him, they understood that He was a teacher, and He was sent by God. They acknowledged Him, no matter how much they wished they could ignore Him.

How did you arrive at the decision to choose your major? If your major is still undecided, what questions do you wrestle with as you try to make that decision?

Think about your faith journey. Have you always understood what you believe, or have you asked clarifying questions to help you grow?

How does God respond to our questions?

2. DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:4-9.

4 "But how can anyone be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked Him. "Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "I assure you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. 8 The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." 9 "How can these things be?" asked Nicodemus.

Think about the last romantic relationship you were in. How did you first approach the person you were interested in? With a seeking heart? Or were you sure they would agree to go out with you?

If your professor said something you disagreed with, would you feel comfortable asking them clarifying questions? How about with your pastor? Whom might you feel more comfortable with? Why?

SALVATION OFFERED

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 22

If we can read where Jesus responded to people’s questions, why are we hesitant to come to Him with ours?

3. DO YOU KNOW THE TRUTH?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:10-12.

10 “Are you a teacher of Israel and don’t know these things?” Jesus replied. **11** “I assure you: We speak what We know and We testify to what We have seen, but you do not accept Our testimony.

12 If I have told you about things that happen on earth and you don’t believe, how will you believe if I tell you about things of heaven?

How easily do you trust people? What are your reasons for trust or distrust?

How easily do you accept the Bible’s teaching? What spiritual disciplines do you engage in that help you to grow in your trust of God?

4. WILL YOU BELIEVE?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:13-16.

13 No one has ascended into heaven except the One who descended from heaven — the Son of Man. **14** Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,

15 so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. **16** “For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

Do you think you might believe in Jesus easier if you witnessed the same miracles that took place during His earthly ministry?

Do you find faith easy or difficult?

While this might seem like an elementary question, there are multiple layers to it. Faith, which is the one of cornerstones of our faith, is both complicated and simple at the same time.

How can both aspects of faith (the simple and complicated) coexist in our beliefs?

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Revisit the questions the students wrote on the index cards. Remind students that we’re not the final authority on their questions. Instead, we simply speak from the wisdom and experiences God has allowed us to have. Students may discover that others asked the very same questions they did, or that they wrote down another question they have. In hearing these read aloud, they may learn they’re not alone in their questions, and it may give them strength

BACKGROUND

Nicodemus and Jesus conversed about the true way to see and to enter the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel, but he acknowledged Jesus as a teacher come from God.

Jesus clarified the differences between those who come to the light and those who hide in darkness. Those who refuse to believe stand condemned by their own sins and failure to receive Jesus.

The ministry of John the Baptist and his humble service to God and for Jesus are highlighted in these verses. John's words, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (3:30), are among the most unselfish words ever spoken.

1. ARE YOU INTERESTED? (JOHN 3:1-3)

Verse 1: John introduced Nicodemus, an important Jewish leader in the time of Jesus. Most Jewish leaders were not receptive to Jesus, but John highlighted Nicodemus to show not all Jewish leaders were so obstinate. Nicodemus was from the Pharisees, which could be a simple faith identifier or a notice that his mission was that of an envoy sent from the Pharisees to assess Jesus' ministry. His high status was confirmed by the title *ruler of the Jews*.

Verse 2: Nicodemus approached Jesus by night. John used light and darkness to convey theological emphasis. When Judas betrayed Jesus, it was night (13:30). Nicodemus might have gone by night since the business of the day was passed. He also might have gone by night to escape detection and being ostracized. His motive was not stated. Either way, he addressed Jesus as *Rabbi*, acknowledging Him as a teacher come from God. Further, Nicodemus admitted his awareness of Jesus' signs and understood them as proof of God's presence with Him.

Verse 3: Jesus understood Nicodemus' role as a "ruler of the Jews" as being to point people to God. Thus, He responded to Nicodemus' comments with a bold theological proposition, *Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. The phrase *kingdom of God* or "of heaven" is common in the Synoptic Gospels, but occurs only twice in John (3:3,5). Instead, John expressed similar meaning through his emphasis on eternal and abundant life.

Jesus' statement restricted access to the kingdom of God to those who were born again. The Greek term is *anōthen* [AH-no-thin]. Nicodemus interpreted *again* in a mundane, literal way, but Jesus had much more in mind. For Jesus, all truth derived "from above," another meaning of *anōthen*. Jesus introduced His bold theological statement with the words *I assure you*. This translation of the double "amen" construction in Greek appears 25 times in John's Gospel to introduce authoritative declarations. The phrase occurs three times in this chapter (3:3,5,11).

2. DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS? (JOHN 3:4-9)

Verse 4: Nicodemus responded to Jesus with a question. Jesus was not offended by Nicodemus' question, though it obviously revealed a gross misunderstanding. The idea of a man being born when he is old revealed that Nicodemus took *anōthen* in the literal sense. His statement might also reveal he was an old man himself, who had an unfulfilled spiritual hunger.

Nicodemus' second question served to underscore the literal, physical way he heard Jesus' proposition. In order to be "born again," a man would have to enter the second time into his mother's womb. This second question was actually an assertion of the impossibility of being "born again" in the physical sense.

Verse 5: As the conversation progressed, Jesus restated and reasserted His proposition. The phrase *I assure you* ("amen, amen" in Greek) marked the proposition as having authoritative weight. Jesus asserted that unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. The term *enter* is probably used synonymously

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with “see” in 3:3. In both 3:3 and 3:5, the verbs “see” and “enter” respectively, are preceded by a negative particle and the verb *dunatai*, rendered *cannot*. The Greek verb *dunatai* means “to have power” or “to be able.” Thus, no one has power or is able to see or to enter the kingdom of God on his own initiative.

Verse 6: Jesus delineated for Nicodemus the difference between physical birth and spiritual birth. Nicodemus had understood “born again” as a reference to physical birth whereas Jesus clearly meant *spiritual birth*. Just as people enter the physical world through physical birth, that is being born of the flesh, so also they enter the kingdom of God through the spiritual birth or being born of the Spirit. If Nicodemus wanted to enter God’s kingdom, he would have to be born of the Spirit. Additionally, if he was to fulfill his obligation, as a “teacher of Israel” (3:10), to point people to God, he would need to understand spiritual birth. Matters of the Spirit cannot be satisfied with works of the flesh.

Verse 7: Jesus cautioned Nicodemus to not be amazed regarding His proposition, *you must be born again*. The term *amazed* carried the idea of “wonder, astonishment, and concern.” Nicodemus was amazed to the point of being anxious that he did not understand the key to entering God’s kingdom. Jesus both comforted and cautioned Nicodemus to accept His proposition as the truth by restating *you must be born again*. The word *you* is plural in Greek and referred to Nicodemus and anyone he might teach.

Verse 8: To help Nicodemus accept His proposition, Jesus used an analogy of the wind. The wind blows where it pleases, unrestrained and unseen. Yet, this invisible force had demonstrable evidence. People could hear its sound. Jesus applied the analogy to those who are born of the Spirit. Other believers rejoice when someone enters the family of God because they understand God has worked a miracle of regeneration in their lives. Non-believers have no way of understanding the phenomenon of spiritual birth or birth “from above.” Yet, no one would think to deny the existence of the wind just because they could not see it and did not know where it comes from or where it is going.

Verse 9: Nicodemus followed up with a question. He desired to know more. So he addressed his keen spiritual hunger by asking questions of the teacher “come from God.” Nicodemus asked, *How can this be?* The term *this* refers to spiritual birth. Though an educated and accomplished teacher and leader, Nicodemus had an unmet spiritual need in his life. He needed what Jesus offered. Yet, he failed to accept Jesus’ offer immediately because he did not understand fully what Jesus was telling him. Embedded in his question, *how can this be*, was Nicodemus’ self-realization he had expended much of his life on rituals and doctrines that could not save him in the end. Providentially, he mounted the courage to ask questions; the answers to those questions provided him much needed information to make correct life choices.

3. DO YOU KNOW THE TRUTH? (JOHN 3:10-12)

Verse 10: Jesus referred to Nicodemus as a teacher of Israel. In most cases this title would carry much prestige, but in the present context Jesus expressed the title within the framework of a question. Indeed, the question was designed to express utter shock and incredulity that a man could be a teacher of Israel and still not know these things. The term *things* referred to being born *anōthen*. The implication of Jesus’ question is striking. No one deserved the title “teacher of Israel,” unless they knew how to help people see and enter the kingdom of God.

Verse 11: Jesus invoked the “double amen” statement, rendered *I assure you*, to introduce another authoritative proclamation (see 3:3,5). Note the fourfold use of *We* and also the pronoun *Our*. These pronouns refer to Jesus and His authority to speak for the Father. As God’s agent sent from above, Jesus is authorized to speak on behalf of the Father and on His own behalf. Because both the Father and the Son know the truth, they speak. Because they both have seen the true way of salvation they testify. The problem was not in the veracity of the testimony, but rather, in the failure of Nicodemus and others to accept it. The statement *you do not accept Our testimony* utilizes the plural pronoun *you*. The problem of rejection ran much deeper than one curious teacher of Israel who did not understand.

Verse 12: Jesus used a lesser-to-greater form of argument to underscore Nicodemus’

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need to reevaluate all he believed and represented. The things that happen on earth were assumed to be easy to grasp. In contrast, the things of heaven were considered beyond reach.

Nicodemus failed to understand the concept of being “born again” without recourse to entering a second time into his mother’s womb. Also, his inability to understand the analogy of the wind as it related to the Spirit, convinced Jesus the “teacher of Israel” was not ready for the weightier things of heaven. Yet, precisely because Jesus was “come from God,” as Nicodemus had acknowledged earlier (3:2), He was the perfect person to explain God (1:18) and to speak of His ways. Jesus assured Nicodemus, he would know the truth about eternal life if he accepted what Jesus was saying.

4. WILL YOU BELIEVE? (JOHN 3:13-16)

Verse 13: Jesus affirmed the only true source for the things of heaven was the One who descended from heaven. He referred to that One as *the Son of Man*, a favorite self-designation. Though *Son of Man* occurred in earlier Jewish literature, the title in John has no parallel in earlier literature with regard to His central role in God’s redemptive history.

Verse 14: Jesus then focused on the passion aspect of His mission. The Son of Man, as God’s agent of salvation, would have to be lifted up in the same way Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness. The allusion is to Numbers 21:4-9. When God’s people sinned by complaining against Him and Moses, God judged them. However, deliverance from judgment required obedience on Moses’ part in constructing a bronze serpent and lifting it up on a pole. Deliverance also mandated faith for those bitten by poisonous snakes to look up to the bronze serpent in order to live. Failure to look upon the bronze snake lifted up on the pole resulted in death.

Jesus would be lifted up on the cross as God’s way of deliverance from sin. To avert judgment, people would have to look upon the One lifted up. The language of being *lifted up* occurred first in Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, but remained part of what Jesus taught to the end of His public ministry (12:34). Through His death on the cross, Jesus being lifted up would draw all people to Him (12:32).

Verse 15: The purpose of the cross, of Jesus being lifted up, was so everyone who believed in Him could have eternal life. The clear implication of Numbers 21 was that only those who looked upon the bronze serpent Moses lifted up on the pole would live. This point applied to Jesus’ cross as well. In John’s Gospel, seeing is believing. Only those who look to Jesus can hope to have eternal life. For John, seeing Jesus meant one believed in Him. The verb *believed* renders a form in Greek meaning “the one who continues to believe” or “constantly gives credence to.”

Verse 16: We learn God’s motivation for sending Jesus; He loved us. We learn Jesus’ unique status; He is God’s One and Only Son. We discover our opportunity; everyone can believe in Him. We are shown the result of our sins; we will perish. We see God’s positive alternative; we can have eternal life.

Jesus assured Nicodemus, people would receive eternal life when they responded to Him in faith. Jesus presented deeper truth to the “teacher of Israel.” Nicodemus’ faith journey began in earnest. The religious system he represented could help people only in living good lives; people needed more than that.



THE POWER TO GIVE LIFE

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 29

WHAT YOU NEED

- > This week's lesson on pages 12-13 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert
- > Refer to "On the Web" on page 12 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert for a supplemental element to enhance your lesson.
- > A shirt or baseball cap from a local college or university to use in the "Getting Started" activity

HIGHLIGHTS

This lesson is about Jesus' offer of living water to a woman in Samaria. Its emphasis is on being intentional in witnessing to people who need to hear the good news of new life. The lesson encourages college students to be intentional about sharing the gospel.

SCRIPTURE

John 4:1-15,25-26

GETTING STARTED

This time of year, many people develop tunnel vision and can think of one thing: sports. If possible, wear a shirt or cap from a local university, or if you're creative and daring enough, wear one from the rival of a local university. Those who are incredibly passionate about their school (or are equally biased against the school's rivals) will begin to freely share their opinion about their school's superiority, both on and off the field. Make note of the people who are driven in their discussions as well as those who hang back and don't contribute to the conversation.

What team are you loyal to?

Why do we identify so closely with sports teams?

THE POWER TO GIVE LIFE

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 29

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

What things are you passionate about?

How do you react when someone shares your zeal?

How do you react when someone is either against or apathetic to your passions?

How does your passion and love of a television show or sports team compare with the passion and love you have for living like a Christ-follower?

1. GO

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 4:1-5.

1 When Jesus knew that the Pharisees heard He was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (though Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), 3 He left Judea and went again to Galilee. 4 He had to travel through Samaria, 5 so He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph.

How easy is it for you to engage in discussions with strangers?

In what ways do you find it easy or difficult to talk to someone different from you?

Diversity and prejudice come in many forms: race, religion, age, gender, sizeism, socioeconomic status, family structure, geographic origin, and so forth. We should never let any bias or negative opinion come between us and others or in any way taint our witness.

2. ENGAGE

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 4:6-9.

6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, worn out from His journey, sat down at the well. It was about six in the evening. 7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water. "Give Me a drink," Jesus said to her, 8 for His disciples had gone into town to buy food. 9 "How is it that You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" she asked Him. For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

What happened the last time a stranger approached you for a conversation? Did you engage in a talk with them, or did you casually find a way to end the chat?

Do others find you approachable? If not, what could you change in your demeanor for others to feel more comfortable in coming to you?

THE POWER TO GIVE LIFE

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 29

3. CLARIFY

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 4:10-15,25-26.

10 Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would ask Him, and He would give you living water." **11** "Sir," said the woman, "You don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do You get this 'living water'? **12** You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are You? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock." **13** Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again. **14** But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again — ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him for eternal life." **15** "Sir," the woman said to Him, "give me this water so I won't get thirsty and come here to draw water."

25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will explain everything to us." **26** "I am He," Jesus told her, "the One speaking to you."

Just as others should feel comfortable in asking us questions, we should feel comfortable in asking God questions. Also, just as we're to humbly approach the throne, we're to humbly come before others when we engage them in conversations.

How might your attitude, action, or conversational approach be perceived as inappropriate, confrontational, or discourteous?

What have been some of the most ineffective approaches to evangelism or witnessing that you've seen? What were some of the most effective?

Has God ever used you to lead someone to Him? Talk about that experience.

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Many times, Christians are perceived as being *against* things, and we're rarely seen as *for* something. Consider places and ways you can engage in areas of social justice by volunteering your time to an issue, such as homelessness, environmental concerns, and so on. The point is not to take action as a small group or as part of a church, but because as believers, it is what we're called to do. Focus on doing this out of love.

OPTION 2:

Read the following transcript of a U.S. naval ship with Canadian authorities aloud to your group. (This is not a true story, but one that's been circulating the Internet since 1996. It's been documented as fake at snopes.com.)

Americans: "Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision."

THE POWER TO GIVE LIFE

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 29

Canadians: "Recommend you divert *your* course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision."

Americans: "This is the captain of a U.S. Navy ship. I say again, divert *your* course."

Canadians: "No, I say again, you divert *your* course."

Americans: "This is the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln, the second largest ship in the United States' Atlantic fleet. We are accompanied by three destroyers, three cruisers, and numerous support vessels. I demand you change your course 15 degrees North, or counter measures will be undertaken to ensure the safety of this ship."

Canadians: "This is a lighthouse. Your call!"

How does this story parallel with the way nonbelievers view the ways we share the gospel? How do you feel about their assessment? What can you do to reverse this negative stereotype?

PRAY

Ask for a volunteer to close the session in prayer and include thoughts about the "Apply to Life" option you chose. Invite God to help you apply this week's discussion.

NEXT WEEK

> Read next week's lesson, "The Power to Save," on pages 14-15 of *Collegiate's* Fall 2013 *Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert.

BACKGROUND

Jesus deliberately travelled through the region of Samaria in an effort to demonstrate that the life-changing gospel was for all people. He turned a mundane conversation about drinking water into a spiritual lesson about eternal life. The Samaritan woman didn't understand Jesus' spiritual message at first. Only after she perceived He was a prophet did His message of eternal life and living water begin to make sense to her. The woman went directly to her town and told others about Jesus. They responded by coming to hear Him for themselves.

1. GO (JOHN 4:1-5)

Verse 1: This verse provides the reason for Jesus' departure from Judea after His conversation with Nicodemus. The Pharisees, the ruling party of the Jews, had heard Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John. Any person who could arouse the interest and gain the following of the people was considered a potential threat to the ruling party. John had appeared on the Pharisees radar earlier (1:19). No doubt Jesus' temple-cleansing incident (2:13-21) played a role in the Pharisees forming suspicions about Him. His ability to attract more disciples than John only heightened their suspicions.

Verse 2: John parenthetically clarified that Jesus' disciples were doing the actual baptizing, not Jesus Himself. The real focus was upon Jesus as a proclaimer of the good news. While baptism is an important topic in its own right, the focus of this lesson on Jesus' intentionality in witnessing to otherwise overlooked people.

Verse 3: As noted in verse 1, a budding suspicion toward Jesus by the Pharisees prompted Him to leave Judea and to return to Galilee. Quite often the Jews took the circuitous route, going through the Trans-Jordan region of Perea to avoid Samaria. The most direct geographical route was through Samaria.

Verse 4: The statement *He had to travel through Samaria* contains the Greek verb *edei* [pronounced ED-ee], indicating necessity. John consistently presented Jesus as being sent from God on a mission to the world. His mission included the evangelization of the otherwise neglected and despised Samaritans. The reason He had to travel through Samaria was not a geographical matter but rather a matter of purpose. Jesus intentionally sought an opportunity to share the good news with an unreached people group by going where they were.

Verse 5: The phrase *a town of Samaria* indicates Samaria referred to a region in this verse. The town is identified three ways: by name, Sychar; by location, near the property that Jacob gave Joseph; and by importance, invoking the name of the patriarch Jacob. The site is no doubt to be associated with the land mentioned in Joshua 24:32.

2. ENGAGE (JOHN 4:6-9)

Verse 6: John supplied three crucial bits of information in relating Jesus' witness encounter with the Samaritan woman. First, he referred to Jacob's well. Ancient village life depended on access to drinking water. Living streams or wells were the most typical sources of life-sustaining water. Second, John told how Jesus was worn out from His journey. Not only does this fact remind us of Jesus' humanity, we are reminded that all humans have common needs. The Samaritan woman would meet Jesus because she needed water just like He did. Finally, the time reference, *about six in the evening*, renders the Greek for "the sixth hour." Because Jesus sat down at the well, He was certain to have an encounter with anyone who came there.

Verse 7: The phrase *a woman of Samaria* would have invoked for John's first readers an abundance of nuances that become more apparent in 4:9. Nonetheless, Jesus engaged her in conversation by asking for a drink of water. His intentions were far higher and more noble than the simple command *Give me a drink* at first suggests. He shared a need

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with the woman, the need for water. This mundane request would open the door for a much deeper, spiritual conversation.

Verse 8: John reminded his readers that Jesus' disciples had gone into town to buy food. The need for food underscores the humanity of Jesus, just as the notice of His being worn out in 4:6 and His request for a drink of water in 4:7.

Verse 9: The Samaritan woman addressed the awkwardness of Jesus' request for water. Jesus, a Jewish man, was asking her, a Samaritan woman, for a drink. The ensuing conversation broke a number of taboos: a Jew talking to a Samaritan, a man and woman who were not related talking in public, a man addressing an outcast woman, implied by the fact she came to draw water at an unusual time and alone. The final statement, *For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans*, underscored the deep prejudice and racial rift existing between the two groups.

3. CLARIFY (JOHN 4:10-15, 25-36)

Verse 10: Jesus had a more important "drink" to offer the woman than she had to offer Him. He deliberately used her query (4:9) as an occasion to push the conversation from the mundane to the spiritual. Jesus' response revealed the woman needed to know three things. First, she needed to know the gift of God (see Romans 6:23). The word *gift*, from the Greek *dorean*, refers to something offered without cost to the recipient. The adjectival use of the same word occurs twice in Matthew 10:8 where Jesus told His disciples, "You have received free of charge; give free of charge." Then He intentionally sent them to witness.

Second, she needed to know the One who was saying, "Give me a drink." Third, she needed to know she could have living water for the asking. The phrase *living water* usually referred to a running stream or an artesian well as opposed to water kept in a cistern. Living water was preferred for its freshness and endless supply. Jesus used the phrase metaphorically to refer to eternal life in the Spirit.

Verse 11: The woman's mind was locked on the mundane level. She noticed Jesus did not have a bucket and reminded Him the well was deep. Her question, *So where do You get this living water*, perhaps carried a sarcastic tone. Jesus exercised patience with the woman even as she failed to grasp the significance of His words.

Verse 12: The woman's question, *You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you*, is ironic. From her perspective, the question was rhetorical and expected a negative answer, but in fact, Jesus was greater than Jacob. She invoked the name of Jacob referring to him as *our father*. Though Samaritans were a mix of Jewish and non-Jewish peoples, they still traced their religious heritage back to the patriarch Jacob. They took pride in his association with their land and this well. This important patriarch had drunk from this very well. What could Jesus offer that was greater than the water that once sustained the great Jacob, his sons, and his livestock?

Verse 13: Jesus answered her question on the mundane level by speaking to the temporary nature of the well water's effect. Those who drank from the well's water would get thirsty again. The water that could be drawn with a bucket could never satisfy the deep thirst of the heart, the thirst for God, for peace, and for forgiveness. The Samaritan woman needed all Jesus had to offer; the well water she came to draw could satisfy a momentary thirst but it could not quench her deepest needs.

Verse 14: Jesus immediately turned the conversation from the mundane to the spiritual, from the temporary to the eternal. The promise that those drinking the spiritual water *will never get thirsty again* — *ever* is emphatic in Greek. The spiritual water Jesus offered her would become an internal well of water springing up for eternal life. Jesus offered the Samaritan woman an unending supply of true, eternal, and abundant life. He intentionally bent her focus from the routine and temporary habit of drawing water toward accepting God's gift of eternal life, a life-enriching spring within her.

Verse 15: The woman politely responded by addressing Jesus as *Sir*, a rendering of the Greek word *kurios*. She asked Jesus to give her this water He had spoken about. Yet, she still operated on the mundane level, associating Jesus' offer with an opportunity to avoid having to come here (to the well) to draw water.

THE POWER TO SAVE

WEEK OF OCTOBER 6

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1. TELL OTHERS YOU BELIEVE

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 4:39-42.

39 Now many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of what the woman said when she testified, "He told me everything I ever did." **40** Therefore, when the Samaritans came to Him, they asked Him to stay with them, and He stayed there two days. **41** Many more believed because of what He said. **42** And they told the woman, "We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the world."

How would you respond to the woman's words in verse 39, "He told me everything I ever did?"

Jesus stayed with the Samaritans because they asked Him. How might your life change if you asked Jesus for not just the big things in life, but the small ones too?

How can we influence others around us to listen to Christ?

The woman at the well told those who were willing to listen about Jesus. Because of the woman's faith, she influenced them to believe in Jesus, too.

2. CHALLENGE OTHERS TO BELIEVE

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 4:43-48.

43 After two days He left there for Galilee. **44** Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. **45** When they entered Galilee, the Galileans welcomed Him because they had seen everything He did in Jerusalem during the festival. For they also had gone to the festival. **46** Then He went again to Cana of Galilee, where He had turned the water into wine. There was a certain royal official whose son was ill at Capernaum. **47** When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and pleaded with Him to come down and heal his son, for he was about to die. **48** Jesus told him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe."

How often do you want to witness a miracle to believe God is at work? Why do we do that?

Why did Jesus challenge the official to believe Him?

The official had such faith in Jesus' word that he left Him to see if his son would live.

How can we have a faith like the official?

3. GUIDE OTHERS TO BELIEVE

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 4:49-54.

49 "Sir," the official said to Him, "come down before my boy dies!" **50** "Go," Jesus told him, "your son will live." The man believed what Jesus said to him and departed. **51** While he was still going

THE POWER TO SAVE

WEEK OF OCTOBER 6

down, his slaves met him saying that his boy was alive. **52** He asked them at what time he got better. "Yesterday at seven in the morning the fever left him," they answered. **53** The father realized this was the very hour at which Jesus had told him, "Your son will live." Then he himself believed, along with his whole household. **54** This, therefore, was the second sign Jesus performed after He came from Judea to Galilee.

Would you have been so quick to believe your son was healed? Why or why not?

Sometimes, Jesus wants us to expand our faith and believe He can do what can't be done. Why do you think God's timing is so important in this story?

How can we help others to believe in Christ?

The official chose to believe in the power of Christ and was rewarded for his faith by seeing his son completely healed. In our own lives, we can use our faith to guide others to believe in Christ.

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Ask each group member to give one example of how they can use their faith to influence others for Christ in the upcoming month.

OPTION 2:

Ask your group what they can take away from this lesson of faith.

PRAY

Ask if any members of your group have had their faith stretched recently. Ask God to help each member keep their faith and not give up on reaching others for Christ.

NEXT WEEK

> Read next week's lesson, "The Power to Heal," on pages 16-17 of *Collegiate's* Fall 2013 *Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert.

BACKGROUND

Many townspeople believed in Jesus because the Samaritan woman told them of her experience with Him. Jesus challenged people to believe in Him without the benefit of “seeing” a sign. The royal official’s whole household came to believe in Jesus as a result of witnessing his faith in Jesus and the healing of his son.

1. TELL OTHERS YOU BELIEVE (JOHN 4:39-42)

Verse 39: According to 4:27-29, the woman left Jesus and her water jar at the well as His disciples returned. She went into town and told the men, “Come see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Messiah?” For her to associate this stranger at the well with the Messiah, revealed a remarkably rapid movement from her focus on the mundane to Jesus’ focus on the eternal, living water. The water jar left at the well indicates the mundane chore of drawing water had taken back seat to the spiritual matter of Jesus being the Messiah, the One who could give her living water as a well springing up inside her.

As a result of the woman telling them about Jesus, many Samaritans from that town believed in Him. Her statement, *He told me everything I ever did*, might contain some hyperbole and some excitement over her encounter, but most assuredly the statement accurately reflects her newfound faith in Jesus. The word *testified* renders the Greek verb meaning “to witness.” Because the woman witnessed to them, many Samaritans believed, putting their faith in Jesus.

Verse 40: The woman’s act of telling others of her belief in Jesus created a community interest strong enough to result in an invitation from the Samaritans for Jesus to stay with them. In ancient cultures, such invitations were regarded as a high form of hospitality. The Samaritans genuinely were interested in who Jesus was and in what He had to tell them. Jesus accepted their hospitality and stayed there two days, a considerable amount of time given He merely was “passing through” Samaria. Interestingly, John’s Gospel, replete with examples of those who saw Jesus’ works and then believed, highlighted the Samaritans, who believed what Jesus said even though they did not see a miracle sign during His two days stay in their town.

Verse 41: The phrase *many more* renders double adjectives utilized in the Greek text to draw a positive comparison. While many Samaritans believed because of the woman’s witness, many more believed as a result of hearing Jesus directly. The statement *because of what He said* is literally “through His word.” This statement confirms that faith indeed comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 1:13).

Verse 42: Apparently several people told the woman, *We no longer believe because of what you said*. They had their own testimony to share; *we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world*. The title *the Savior of the world* occurs only here in the Gospel and once in 1 John 4:14. The title revealed God’s love and concern for the world (1:9; 3:16-17). The term *world* represents the scope of God’s plan and the focus of Jesus’ mission. Only Jesus could be the Savior in the way the world needed to be saved.

2. CHALLENGE OTHERS TO BELIEVE (JOHN 4:43-48)

Verse 43: This verse serves to transition the readers’ focus from the mission in Samaria to the ongoing mission in Galilee, located geographically to the north. The mention of the two days served two purposes. First, it underscored the extended stay Jesus had with the Samaritans. Second, the phrase bound the Samaritan story to the healing of the royal official’s son to follow. The Samaritans, so despised by the Jews, heard and believed. In contrast, the Jews needed to see signs and wonders or they would not believe (4:48).

Verse 44: Prophets played an important role in Israel’s history as the spokesmen of God to the covenant people. Yet, those who knew these men best, their family and fellow

townspeople, had the most difficult time accepting them. Thus Jesus Himself testified to the truth that a prophet has no honor in his own country. The statement indicates Jesus viewed Himself as a prophet.

However, what are we to make of *his own country*? The Greek word means “fatherland.” Jesus was born in Bethlehem, making Him a man of Judea, the region He recently had left due to growing suspicion of Him by the Pharisees. Yet, Jesus grew up in Nazareth and headquartered His ministry in Capernaum, both cities in Galilee.

Verse 45: The answer to identifying Jesus’ “own country” was thought to be Judea because this verse indicated the people of Galilee welcomed Him. Yet, two facts mitigate against this otherwise simple solution. First, the welcome extended to Jesus was based on the crowd having seen everything He did in Jerusalem. Jesus chided them for needing to see signs and wonders as a basis for faith (4:48). Second, we learn from the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus faced much disbelief and rejection in Galilee as well. Indeed, Matthew applied the saying about a prophet not having honor in his hometown to Jesus’ visit to Nazareth (Matthew 13:54-58).

Perhaps Jesus stated the axiom of a prophet not having honor in his “own country” to signal to His followers to expect opposition everywhere, but particularly from those who knew them best. This interpretation would fit well the Ephesian context where the Gospel probably was written. In a real sense, Jesus faced some opposition everywhere He went. In this sense the whole world was His “own country” (1:10-11).

Verse 46: This verse set the stage for the final episode in John 4, the healing of the royal official’s son. Jesus returned to Cana of Galilee. Cana was identified as the location of Jesus’ first sign-miracle, the turning of water into wine at the wedding (2:1-11). At this point the reader was introduced to a royal official whose son was ill and in dire need of Jesus’ healing touch. The problem was Cana was some 16 miles away from Capernaum.

Verse 47: That this man heard Jesus had come from Judea into Galilee indicates Jesus’ fame had grown to the point people were “keeping track” of Him. The man took the initiative to seek Jesus out, traveling from Capernaum to Cana. More importantly, the man pleaded with Jesus to come down and heal his son. The term *pleaded* means “to ask” or “to entreat;” Urgency is implied by the notice he was about to die. The phrase *come down* is geographically accurate; Cana was nestled in the hills of Galilee while Capernaum was located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, almost 700 feet below Sea level.

Verse 48: This verse often has been understood as a sharp rebuke of the royal official who requested Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son. It’s hard to imagine Jesus rebuking a father for wanting his son to recover from a life-threatening illness. He in no way was being unkind or insensitive to the anxious father. Jesus sought to challenge the official to a deeper faith based on trust in His words not merely in seeing a sign.

Jesus was speaking to the royal official as indicated by the statement Jesus told him. Yet, what Jesus said did not pertain to the father, but rather to those gathered around him in Cana, the ones identified as having “welcomed” Jesus “because they had seen everything He did in Jerusalem” (4:45).

The word *people* does not appear in the Greek text but was added by the translators of several English versions to clarify Jesus’ intent. The pronoun *you* is plural in the Greek. Jesus’ problem was not with a loving father wanting to see his son delivered from certain death. His problem was with those around Him who refused to believe in Him unless they could see signs and wonders.

3. GUIDE OTHERS TO BELIEVE (JOHN 4:49-54)

Verse 49: Jesus’ challenge not to depend on seeing signs and wonders as a condition of believing at first was lost on the anxious official who feared for his son’s life. The official repeated his plea for Jesus to come down before his son died. Every parent understands the father’s urgency. Yet, Jesus, the consummate teacher, was guiding the man to move from needing to see a miracle, to a deeper faith by which he could take Jesus at His word. The father’s anxiety did not negate his deeper need for a mature faith in Jesus Himself.

Verse 50: The father’s urgency to see his son healed and Jesus’ desire to challenge the

COMMENTARY

man to a deeper faith converged in Jesus' statement, *Go, your son will live*. The man had to trust Jesus and go back to Capernaum without seeing his son cured. As he made his way down the sixteen mile trail to Capernaum, he traveled with only a father's hope and Jesus' promise, *your son will live*.

John informed his readers *the man believed what Jesus said*. John's purpose was to guide other people, beginning with those who read his Gospel, to believe in Jesus by putting their faith in what Jesus said. However, faith must be accompanied by action. The man could not merely say he believed; he had to act on his faith. Jesus told him to go, so he departed. No more pleading for Jesus to come down to Capernaum with him; no more begging for Jesus to heal his son. Assured by faith alone, the man departed to Capernaum, leaving Jesus and His disciples in Cana.

Verse 51: Somewhere along the journey home, the official encountered several of his house slaves, who had been dispatched to find him. The slaves informed him his boy was alive. Jesus had healed his boy by merely speaking the word. Jesus did not have to be present physically.

Verse 52: The father inquired about the time his son got better. The word *yesterday* indicates the journey home spanned two days. The time *seven in the morning* in the HCSB is referred to as "the seventh hour" in the NASB and as "one in the afternoon" in the NIV. The Greek is literally rendered as "the seventh hour." Both seven in the morning and one in the afternoon are plausible translations depending on the system used to reckon time. The mention of *fever* occurs only here in the story and does not help us identify the son's illness.

Verse 53: However one reckons the time reference in 4:52, the significance of the reference is to be seen in the coordination of the boy's recovery and Jesus' pronouncement. The official's son recovered only when Jesus gave the word as is stressed by the statement *the very hour at which Jesus had told him*.

Previously, the man was said to have believed what Jesus said (4:50). What does it mean to be told again he himself believed upon learning the time of healing coincided with Jesus' pronouncement? John realized through experience and observation, faith is not a static one-time decision. To believe in Jesus is to make a life-long commitment to Him. As people believe in Christ, their faith grows and is reinforced through various life episodes.

Obviously, the royal official had a modicum of faith in Jesus' ability, indicated by his coming to Jesus for help. That faith was strengthened by Jesus' pronouncement, "Go, your son will live" (4:50). The man believed and departed. When the man realized his son's healing coincided with Jesus' pronouncement the day before, his faith further deepened (4:53). Indeed, his whole household began to believe.

Verse 54: John concluded the account by reminding his readers this was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Jerusalem. Indeed, the first sign in Cana was one the participants could see, water was turned to wine. The second sign was one they could not see at the time, the royal official's son was healed.



THE POWER TO HEAL

WEEK OF OCTOBER 13

WHAT YOU NEED

- > This week’s lesson on pages 16-17 of *Collegiate’s Fall 2013 Explore the Bible®* pull-out insert
- > Refer to “Take Action” on page 16 of *Collegiate’s Fall 2013 Explore the Bible®* pull-out insert for a supplemental element to enhance your lesson.

HIGHLIGHTS

This lesson is about the healing of a man at the pool of Bethesda. Its emphasis is on helping people with physical needs. The lesson encourages college students to take bold actions that will benefit people with physical needs.

SCRIPTURE

John 5:2-3a,5-17

GETTING STARTED

Write several disabilities down on pieces of paper (can’t use your legs, can’t talk, can’t use your eyes, etc.). Have a fellowship time where you interact with your different disabilities. (Note: Use sensitivity in the event someone in your class truly embodies one of these.)

What was your disability?

What was it like to interact in that way?

What would it be like to live with that disability on a daily basis?

THE POWER TO HEAL

WEEK OF OCTOBER 13

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1. TAKING THE INITIATIVE

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 5:2-3A, 5-9A.

2 By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Hebrew, which has five colonnades. **3a** Within these lay a large number of the sick

5 One man was there who had been sick for 38 years. **6** When Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had already been there a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to get well?" **7** "Sir," the sick man answered, "I don't have a man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I'm coming, someone goes down ahead of me." **8** "Get up," Jesus told him, "pick up your mat and walk!" **9a** Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.

Why would Jesus pick this particular man to heal?

Physical needs can mean anything from certain medical conditions to addiction. How can we emulate Jesus to those with physical needs?

How might the man have felt after he was healed? What would you have done after experiencing such a miracle?

Jesus healed a man who needed it. We can minister to those around us.

2. DEALING WITH RESISTANCE

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 5:9B-13.

9b Now that day was the Sabbath, **10** so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "This is the Sabbath! It's illegal for you to pick up your mat." **11** He replied, "The man who made me well told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" **12** "Who is this man who told you, 'Pick up your mat and walk'?" they asked. **13** But the man who was cured did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

Why didn't Jesus tell the man who He was?

Are there any rules like the Sabbath that prevent you from helping others?

How can you respond to resistance in ministry?

3. KEEPING ON

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 5:14-17.

14 After this, Jesus found him in the temple complex and said to him, "See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn't happen to you." **15** The man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. **16** Therefore, the Jews began persecuting Jesus because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. **17** But Jesus responded to them, "My Father is still working, and I am working also."

THE POWER TO HEAL

WEEK OF OCTOBER 13

We can't heal people like Jesus. How can we help those around us?

Why do you think Jesus waited to reveal His identity to the man?

How might your life have changed after encountering Jesus as the man did?

We can't heal as Jesus did, but He was working for God to glorify His kingdom. And we can do the same for those around us.

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Brainstorm ways your group can help others in the community. Ask group members if they know of a specific person, church member, or family member who is sick or has been in the hospital. Plan to visit that person and commit to praying for him or her.

OPTION 2:

Ask the group to focus on the needs of those around them during the week. Plan to reach one person who has a specific need.

PRAY

Ask God to help us accept His work. Pray for the healing of others and the safety of those around you.

NEXT WEEK

> Read next week's lesson, "The Power to Meet Needs," on pages 18-19 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible®* pull-out insert.

BACKGROUND

Jesus brought immediate relief to a man who had been sick for 38 years, but He faced opposition from religious leaders because He healed on the Sabbath. Jesus spoke of the inseparability of His mission and God's will. That Jesus is the One sent by God is confirmed by God, John the Baptist, Jesus' works, and Moses. Those who do not accept Jesus face the resurrection of judgment.

1. TAKING THE INITIATIVE (JOHN 5:2-3A, 5-9A)

Verse 2: The pool called Bethesda was located on the eastern part of Jerusalem just north of the temple mount. Archaeological evidence has proven the accuracy of John's description. Bethesda consisted of a pool surrounded by four colonnades with a fifth colonnade dissecting the pool.

Verse 3a: The pool had developed a reputation as an "aesclepion," a place noted for healing. Thus, a large number of the sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed people gathered on the five porches, hoping to be healed. The waters of the pool frequently bubbled up. The ancients believed an angel was troubling the water and the first person to enter the pool would be healed (5:3b-4,7). Jesus knew He would encounter people with physical needs when He went to the pool of Bethesda.

Verse 5: John calls our attention to a particular man who had been sick for 38 years. I've often wondered about the man's age. Was he 38, having never known the joy of a healthy body? Was he 76, having been struck with some debilitating disease in midlife and leaving him nothing but memories of what used to be? We can imagine the man's heightening despair in not being healed in so long a time.

Verse 6: Jesus saw him lying there. The first step toward helping people with physical needs is to see them in a compassionate way. How Jesus knew he already had been there a long time is nowhere stated. However, in John's Gospel, Jesus is presented as the omniscient Savior. Jesus took the initiative by asking the man, *do you want to get well?* The term *well* means "to be whole" or "to be healthy."

At first glance, the question would seem silly and the answer obvious. However, Jesus was engaging the man in a conversation that would change his life. Jesus, not the pool, was the man's only hope for healing. The question was designed to redirect the man's focus from the pool to Jesus.

Verse 7: The sick man answered Jesus by explaining why he was not yet healed. First, he had no one to help him. Second, his best efforts at getting into the pool on his own were always inadequate. Third, the man's theology was confined by the belief that only the first person into the pool when the waters were stirred up could be healed. No help, no health, no hope. The man needed outside intervention!

Verse 8: Jesus saw through the man's explanation of failure to a soul desiring to be made well. He commanded the man to get up and to pick up his mat and walk. The verb *walk* derives from the Greek *peripateō*, meaning to "walk around." The man's specific sickness was never identified, but Jesus' command for him to get up and walk has led many scholars to believe the man was lame. No longer would the man have to wait on help that would never arrive. No longer would he have to try in vain to beat everyone else into the water. No longer would the confinements of his theology deny him true healing.

Verse 9a: The man was healed instantly. The Greek adjective, *eutheōs*, means "immediately" or "at once." Note the sequence; the man got well, meaning he was made whole or healthy, picked up his mat, and then started to walk (*peripateō*).

This encounter between Jesus and the sick man provides many points for us to ponder. First, the man obviously had a long-term physical need, but he had no one to help him. Second, the man tried to help himself into the pool but others pushed ahead of him. His inability to overcome his disability was not due to laziness or lack of trying on his part. Third, the man adopted the local theology of the *aesclepion* thinking only the first person into the pool could get healed. Such theology was based on superstition and a lack of understanding. Even worse, that theology failed to allow for the possibility of God

COMMENTARY

intervening directly in their behalf.

2. DEALING WITH RESISTANCE (JOHN 5:9B-13)

Verse 9b: The first time I read this story closely the end of 5:9 surprised me. John wrote, *Now that day was the Sabbath*. My first thought was “what difference does that make?” or “So what.” Yet, the healing occurring on the Sabbath was a big deal to the religious leaders as we shall see.

Verse 10: The phrase *the Jews* refers to the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day. The identification of the man as the one who had been healed renders the Greek verb *therapeuō*, from which the English terms “therapy” and “therapeutic” derive. The verb is in the perfect tense indicating the finality of Jesus’ healing touch. The Jews reminded the man he was breaking Sabbath law because it was illegal for him to pick up his mat. The term *illegal* translates the Greek construction meaning “not permitted” or “not proper.” Either way religious censorship is in view.

One would think those who supposedly represented God would be overjoyed by the healing of a man who had been sick for 38 years. Instead, Sabbath legalism was uppermost in their minds. They clearly resisted the man as he carried out Jesus’ command to take his mat, rise up, and walk around.

Verse 11: The man appears to have been caught off guard and quickly defended himself by “passing the buck” to Jesus. In a great example of Johannine irony, the healed man both acknowledged Jesus (though not by name) for making him well and incriminated Him for saying *Pick up your mat and walk*. If the man was committing illegal activity on the Sabbath, it was not his fault.

Verse 12: The religious leaders inquired about the identity of the man who told him to pick up his mat and walk. Interestingly, they made no reference to his healing at this point. Is this episode another example of straining at the gnat and swallowing the camel (Matthew 23:24)? Did they miss “the big picture” (the man was released from 38 years of suffering) because of their hyperfocus on a man-made Sabbath regulation?

Verse 13: The man did not know who had healed him. Jesus had not identified Himself, thinking the man’s wholeness was the main thing at the time. Our Savior healed the man and then slipped away into the crowd. The verb *slipped away* meant simply that He “withdrew” into the anonymity of the multitudes. The presence of the crowd was to be expected from the great number of sick people, from the people who attended to them, and from the presence of curious onlookers keeping tabs on Jesus.

3. KEEPING ON (JOHN 5:14-17)

Verse 14: Jesus not only took the initiative to heal the man, He also took the initiative and found him after he had been accosted by the religious leaders. The phrase *temple complex* renders the Greek term *hieron*, referring to the vast courts that surrounded the temple proper.

Jesus began by calling the man’s attention to his newfound wholeness, *See, you are well*. Then, unexpectedly He commanded the man, *Do not sin anymore*. The command suggested two aspects of the man’s prior life. First, he had been guilty of sinning in some way. The term *anymore* literally means “no longer.” Second, Jesus’ juxtaposing of the man’s good health and the command not to sin anymore, strongly suggests his sickness was attributable in some way to his sinful lifestyle. The Apostle Paul certainly believed sickness could derive from sin (1 Corinthians 11:27-30). Interestingly, in the other Sabbath healing story in John, Jesus deliberately disavowed the theology of physical disability being the result of the blind man’s sin (9:1-3).

Verse 15: For some inexplicable reason, the man reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. The man might have wanted to curry favor with the Jewish leadership since their blessing was necessary to be reinstated as a societal member in good standing. Often sickness rendered a person ceremonially unclean. Only the priests could declare one clean again. The man also might have wanted to get himself off the hook for violating the Sabbath prohibition against carrying his mat. From a more

COMMENTARY

innocent perspective, the man might not have known the negative ramifications for Jesus when he gave the religious leaders His name.

Verse 16: As a result of the man identifying Jesus, the Jews began persecuting Him because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. This verse contains the first of three occurrences in John of the Greek verb *diōkō*, meaning “to persecute” or “to pursue.” The other two occurrences of the verb are found in John 15:20, where Jesus forewarned His disciples they would be persecuted just as He had been persecuted.

Note how the persecution theme is bound to the Sabbath controversy. The Jewish leaders began persecuting Jesus because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. This same connection of Sabbath and persecution occurred again when Jesus healed the man blind from birth on the Sabbath (9:14-16).

Verse 17: Jesus responded to, or “answered,” His persecutors by stating, *My Father is still working, and I am working also*. The Gospel of John routinely depicts Jesus as speaking the words and doing the works of His Father, who sent Him into the world (4:34; 5:24,36; 6:38; et al.).

Both occurrences of the verb *working* in 5:17 are in the Greek present tense indicating ongoing activity. Jesus would not allow persecution or resistance to deter Him from working because His Father was not deterred.

THE POWER TO MEET NEEDS

WEEK OF OCTOBER 20

WHAT YOU NEED

- > This week’s lesson on pages 18-19 of *Collegiate’s Fall 2013 Explore the Bible®* pull-out insert
- > Refer to “On the Web” on page 18 of *Collegiate’s Fall 2013 Explore the Bible®* pull-out insert for a supplemental element to enhance your lesson.

HIGHLIGHTS

This lesson is about the feeding of the 5,000. Its emphasis is on providing food for hungry people and sharing the gospel with them. The lesson encourages college students to get involved in efforts to feed and share the gospel with hungry people.

SCRIPTURE

John 6:5-11,26-31,47-51

GETTING STARTED

Share a time in your life when someone has come through with a needed meal or a helping hand.

How did that small act impact your relationship with that person?

THE POWER TO MEET NEEDS

WEEK OF OCTOBER 20

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1. SEE THE NEED

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 6:5-7.

5 Therefore, when Jesus looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward Him, He asked Philip, "Where will we buy bread so these people can eat?" 6 He asked this to test him, for He Himself knew what He was going to do. 7 Philip answered, "Two hundred • denarii worth of bread wouldn't be enough for each of them to have a little."

Why might Jesus have asked Phillip where they could buy bread?

How would you have responded?

Jesus knew what to do with the multitude of people, but Phillip didn't. Jesus knows what to do with our ministry; all we need to do is ask Him.

2. LOOK FOR RESOURCES

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 6:8-11.

8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 9 "There's a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish — but what are they for so many?" 10 Then Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, so they sat down. The men numbered about 5,000. 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, and after giving thanks He distributed them to those who were seated — so also with the fish, as much as they wanted.

We can't multiply food like Jesus can, but how can we help feed others?

What was Jesus' purpose in giving thanks before allowing everyone to eat?

God multiplied the fish and bread. How can you make a small ministry into a big one?

Jesus multiplied the food so no one would be hungry. God uses small means to accomplish large goals. Even if we don't feel we have much to offer, God can still use our contribution.

3. SHARE THE GOSPEL

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 6:26-31.

26 Jesus answered, "I assure you: You are looking for Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. 27 Don't work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal of approval on Him." 28 "What can we do to perform the works of God?" they asked. 29 Jesus replied, "This is the work of God — that you believe in the One He has sent." 30 "What sign then are You going to do so we may see and believe You?" they asked. "What are You going to

THE POWER TO MEET NEEDS

WEEK OF OCTOBER 20

perform? **31** *Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*"

How does feeding people facilitate sharing the gospel?

How did Jesus show His listeners that God provides for both physical and emotional needs?

4. FOLLOW THROUGH

> **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 6:47-51.**

47 *"I assure you: Anyone who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."*

Why would Jesus remind the Jews of the manna their ancestors ate?

Look back at the previous verses. Why did Jesus follow up those words with these verses?

Do the Jews in this passage remind you of their ancestors from Exodus and Leviticus? What can their similarities teach us?

Jesus is the Bread of life, and He told His listeners that by following Him, they would have eternal life. When we serve others, we can remind them that although we get physically hungry, earthly bread won't satisfy us. Through Jesus, we can be spiritually full.

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Find out ahead of time the names of local homeless shelters or food kitchens. With your group, decide how you can help these places, whether it's volunteering to make a meal for them or donating food.

OPTION 2:

Set aside a specific time to fast and pray for hunger and spiritual revival. Be sensitive to group members who might have specific health issues when it comes to fasting.

BACKGROUND

Jesus blessed five loaves and two fish and then fed a hungry crowd. He calmed His fearful disciples by joining them in their storm-tossed boat and bringing them safely to the shore. He utilized an opportunity to share the Gospel with people whom He had fed when they were hungry. All people made a decision with regard to Jesus Christ, some walked away while others embraced Him in faith.

1. SEE THE NEED (JOHN 6:5-7)

Verse 5: In last week's lesson, Jesus "saw" the sick man at the pool of Bethesda (5:6). Then He healed him. In this week's lesson, Jesus looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward Him. Jesus inquired of Philip where they could buy bread enough to feed so many hungry people.

Verse 6: As was usually the case, Jesus did not ask seeking information, but rather, He was challenging His disciple. He asked in order to test him. The verb *test*, *peirazō*, means "to make a trial of" in this context. Jesus was "sizing up" Philip's ability to cope with a great ministry need in the light of limited resources.

Verse 7: Philip logically assessed the problem. Two hundred denarii, or 200 full days' wages, would not suffice to buy enough bread. That amount of money represented about 75 percent of what a common laborer would earn in a year. Even if they had the money and could find the bread, each person would get very little. Their hunger would not be satisfied.

2. LOOK FOR RESOURCES (JOHN 6:8-11)

Verses 8-9: As Philip contemplated the desperate situation, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke with Jesus. Andrew is also mentioned with Philip in 12:22, when the Greeks wanted to see Jesus. He found a boy with a lunch of five barley loaves and two fish. The word *boy* renders the Greek term for "a young child," emphasizing his insignificant size. Similarly, the lunch was specified as consisting of five barley loaves and two fish to emphasize its scantiness. Like Philip, Andrew realized the resources were grossly inadequate to meet the needs of so many people.

Verse 10: Jesus was undaunted by the great needs and scarce resources. He demonstrated what "He Himself knew He was going to do" (6:6). He began by having the people to sit down. This command indicated He intended to feed them. Having the people sit down facilitated distribution of the food.

John informed his readers there was plenty of grass in that place. The site of the feeding of the 5,000 shown to tourists today is located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. However, the higher probability rests with the region near Bethsaida on the northeast shore. The specification, *the men numbered about 5,000*, underscored the tremendous size of the crowd and thus their overwhelming needs.

Verse 11: Jesus took the little boy's five loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to the seated crowd. The significant role played by the insignificant boy and his insignificant sized lunch is brought to the fore. A handful of resources is adequate when blessed by Jesus.

The Greek term rendered *giving thanks* is *eucharistesas*, from which the term *Eucharist* derives. For this and other reasons, many scholars have interpreted John 6 as support for the Lord's Supper and the doctrine of transubstantiation whereby the bread becomes the actual body of Christ. Such an approach is not necessary or justifiable since John used the same Greek term to express thanks in a non-eating situation (11:41). The clear emphasis is upon thanking God for providing for human needs, in this case food.

To Philip's credit, he tried to calculate how much food would be necessary to feed the entire crowd. His astronomical calculations of 200 days' wages paralyzed him into thinking nothing could be done. Likewise Andrew took the initiative and found the small boy. He at least brought some resources to Jesus. Even so he queried how so little could

COMMENTARY

feed so many. Both Philip and Andrew made the mistake of looking past their greatest resource, Jesus!

3. SHARE THE GOSPEL (JOHN 6:26-31)

Verse 26: Eventually, Jesus and His disciples left the site of the feeding miracle. The crowd found Him on the other side of the sea (6:25). Jesus used the occasion of their seeking him to speak to them about eternal life.

He began by saying they had not sought Him because they saw the signs. The feeding of the 5,000 is one of seven signs John selected to paint his portrait of Jesus. Instead, they had sought Jesus because they ate the loaves and were filled.

Jesus' opportunity to share the Gospel was a direct result of His ministry of feeding the hungry! The handful of loaves provided by the small boy seemed insignificant at first. Indeed, Andrew had questioned, "what are they for so many?" However, as a result of Jesus' miracle they were filled, completely satisfied physically. Jesus deliberately redirected their focus to spiritual bread.

Verse 27: Jesus transitioned seamlessly from physical bread to spiritual bread. Moses had used a similar tactic on the plains of Moab to remind the people of the connection between God's provision of manna and the life-giving word of God (Deuteronomy 8:3). Physical bread was the food that perishes. A better use of one's life was to work for the food that lasts for eternal life. In this context, the verb *work* does not indicate eternal life is secured through human effort. Rather, Jesus was telling them to seek spiritual bread with the same or greater intensity than they had the physical bread. Only the Son of Man could give them eternal life. When God set His seal of approval on Jesus, He identified His Son as the source of the food that lasts.

Verse 28: The crowd responded by asking what they could do to perform the works of God. We have to be careful to hear Jesus' answer; otherwise, we will fall victim to false theology that teaches that our works result in our salvation.

Verse 29: Jesus clarified the issue in a very simple way. He defined *the work of God* as to believe in the One God had sent. Salvation is by God's grace, appropriated by each individual through faith. The verb *believe* derives from the Greek *pisteuō*, meaning "to entrust oneself." The same verb is used 98 times in the Gospel of John, most notably in 3:16. The One God had sent is a clear reference to Jesus.

Verse 30: The crowd asked for a sign of confirmation, a request for Jesus' credentials. Allegedly, they would believe if they could see Him do a sign. Faith contingent upon sight is a common theme in John (20:29). Astonishingly, they sought a sign as if they had forgotten already His miraculous feeding of the 5,000 men.

Verse 31: The crowd reminded Jesus that their fathers, or ancestors, ate the manna in the wilderness. They then referred to the Scripture, just as it is written. The reflection that God gave them bread from heaven to eat was based on God's provision of manna during the 40 years in the wilderness (Exodus 16:35).

4. FOLLOW THROUGH (JOHN 6:47-51)

Verse 47: Jesus' self-identification as "the bread of life" (6:35) touched off a firestorm of complaints and grumbling (6:41-42). Therefore, He sought to calm the crowd by saying, "I assure you: Anyone who believes has eternal life."

The phrase *I assure you* renders the Greek construction consisting of a double use of "amen." This double "amen" construction occurs 25 times in John's Gospel beginning in 1:51 and extending to 21:18. Four of those occurrences are in the present chapter (6:26,32,47,53). Jesus is always the speaker; He used the double "amen" construction to introduce important pronouncements.

Verse 48: Jesus repeated the simple claim He had made earlier; *I am the bread of life*. In the previous proclamation Jesus stated, "No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry" (see 6:35). The bread motif that began when Jesus fed the 5,000 provided Jesus the opportunity to follow up with additional teachings about how to obtain eternal life. Just as physical bread nurtures the physical body, so also the bread of life brings eternal



QUESTIONS ABOUT JESUS

WEEK OF OCTOBER 27

WHAT YOU NEED

- > This week's lesson on pages 20-21 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible®* pull-out insert
- > Refer to "Quoteworthy" on page 20 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible®* pull-out insert for a supplemental element to enhance your lesson.
- > Index cards and pens for the Option 1 "Apply to Life" activity

HIGHLIGHTS

This lesson concerns Jesus' responses to questions about Him and His teaching. Its emphasis is on finding answers to questions that arise about Jesus. The lesson encourages college students to use the Scriptures to answer questions about Jesus.

SCRIPTURE

John 7:14-18,25-31,33-36

GETTING STARTED

Have everyone discuss where they're from, what they're studying in school, and what they'd like to do for a living. Ask the group as a whole:

Who in the group would you ask about:

- Science
- History
- Math
- English

Why would you go to that person?

What qualifies them to answer that question?

QUESTIONS ABOUT JESUS

WEEK OF OCTOBER 27

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1. JESUS' TEACHING IS VALID

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 7:14-18.

14 When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple complex and began to teach. **15** Then the Jews were amazed and said, "How does He know the Scriptures, since He hasn't been trained?" **16** Jesus answered them, "My teaching isn't Mine but is from the One who sent Me. **17** If anyone wants to do His will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God or if I am speaking on My own. **18** The one who speaks for himself seeks his own glory. But He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

What about Jesus' teachings would have made you skeptical?

How did Jesus answer His listeners?

Why do you think He responded they way He did?

Jesus told His listeners who He was. Jesus is from God, so we can believe and know that His teachings are true.

2. JESUS IS GOD

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 7:25-31.

25 Some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Isn't this the man they want to kill?" **26** Yet, look! He's speaking publicly and they're saying nothing to Him. Can it be true that the authorities know He is the Messiah? **27** But we know where this man is from. When the Messiah comes, nobody will know where He is from." **28** As He was teaching in the temple complex, Jesus cried out, "You know Me and you know where I am from. Yet I have not come on My own, but the One who sent Me is true. You don't know Him; **29** I know Him because I am from Him, and He sent Me." **30** Then they tried to seize Him. Yet no one laid a hand on Him because His hour had not yet come. **31** However, many from the crowd believed in Him and said, "When the Messiah comes, He won't perform more signs than this man has done, will He?"

From Scripture, how do we know God sent Jesus?

What does it tell you about God's plan for Jesus when John writes, "His hour had not yet come"?

Which of Jesus' words do you find most confusing? How do His words help you understand He's God?

3. WE CAN UNDERSTAND JESUS' TEACHING

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 7:33-36.

33 Then Jesus said, "I am only with you for a short time. Then I'm going to the One who sent Me. **34** You will look for Me, but you will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come." **35** Then the

QUESTIONS ABOUT JESUS

WEEK OF OCTOBER 27

Jews said to one another, "Where does He intend to go so we won't find Him? He doesn't intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, does He?" 36 What is this remark He made: "You will look for Me, and you will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come?"

The Pharisees were confused by Jesus' answer. Why do you think Jesus explained it this way?

These verses remind us of the gospel message being carried throughout the world. What other verses tell us about sharing the gospel?

What specific elements in the verses help point out God's plan?

Jesus explained His ministry to the Pharisees, who didn't understand Him. But we know Jesus was talking about dying on the cross and sharing the gospel message. The context of Jesus' answer makes our knowledge of Him clearer.

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Hand out index cards to each group member. Ask them to write down a question they have about Jesus, and then ask them to commit to searching Scripture for the answer. Ask them to prepare to share their findings with the group during the next Bible study gathering.

OPTION 2:

Ask the group to discuss how they might have reacted to Jesus if they were a part of the audience in John 7.

Would you have believed Jesus' word? Why or why not?

PRAY

We can be curious about God and His plan, but God also wants us to search diligently for Him. Pray that God will give each group member curiosity to seek out the truth about God and His plan for their lives in His Word.

NEXT WEEK

> Read next week's lesson, "Hit the Lights," on pages 22-23 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert.

BACKGROUND

Jesus declared His teachings valid because He sought the glory of the One who sent Him. The Jewish people were divided over Jesus. Some wanted to kill Him; others trusted He was sent from God.

Jesus' teachings were often misunderstood during His ministry and became clear only after His resurrection. The Jewish authorities wanted to seize Jesus, believing Him to be an imposter, but Nicodemus wanted to know more about Him.

1. JESUS' TEACHING IS VALID (JOHN 7:14-18)

Verse 14: *The festival* refers to the seven day Festival of Tabernacles, one of the three major festivals commanded by the Lord for Jewish men to attend (Deuteronomy 16:16). Jesus began to teach in the temple complex. The Greek term rendered *temple complex* is *hieron* and refers the vast courtyards surrounding the temple. We know from the Gospels and from the Book of Acts that Jesus and His disciples often taught in these courtyards. *The festival* would have attracted Jews from many regions to the temple complex.

Verse 15: *The Jews* could refer to the Jewish leaders or to the Jewish populace in general. They queried as to how Jesus knew the Scriptures, literally "letters" or "writings." From their perspective, Jesus did not have academic credentials because He hadn't been *trained*. The same Greek verb was used in 6:45 where Jesus stated those who have listened to and "learned" from the Father come to Me. Thus, John's use of this verb advanced the idea that a person could have been trained by God.

Verse 16: Jesus' response confirmed the idea advanced in the previous verse. Jesus' training was from the One who sent Him. The noun rendered *teaching* is the Greek term *didache*. The English word "didactic" derives from this Greek word. John chose to stress that neither Jesus' words nor works were His own but rather those of the One who sent Him (8:26,29). Jesus' mission was to do the will of His Father (4:34). A major facet of the divine will was for Jesus to teach the Jews the truth about the Scriptures, freeing them from the bondage of centuries of human traditions that had built up around and smothered the Word.

Verse 17: Jesus then specified a person's desire to do God's will as a criterion to understand whether His teaching was from God or if Jesus was speaking on His own. The validity of His teaching could be seen only by those seeking to do God's will.

The phrase *if I am speaking on My own* referred to self-validation, which rarely would have been accepted in Jesus' culture. In Jesus' day, a teacher received validation or honor from His peers in a social context. Self-validation would be considered shameful; the teaching would be rejected.

Verse 18: Jesus pointed to the shame of a teacher who speaks for himself and seeks his own glory. *Glory*, the Greek *doxa*, refers to honor, social acceptance, or acclaim. The word *for* derives from the Greek term meaning "from." Thus if one speaks "from" himself, the speaker is the source of his own teachings, and is thus not credible.

In contrast, Jesus did not speak "from" Himself, nor did He seek His own glory. Rather He sought the glory of the One who sent Him. As a result, He was true and there was no unrighteousness in Him. The term *true* carried many nuances such as "dependable," "trustworthy," "genuine," and "authentic." The phrase *no unrighteousness* represented the opposite side of the same coin, meaning the person had no deceit, wickedness, or wrongdoing within him. Thus, Jesus' teaching was and is valid because He Himself is true and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

2. JESUS IS GOD (JOHN 7:25-31)

Verse 25: Some of the people of Jerusalem, attending the festival, were aware of Jesus' ministry and of the authorities' desire to kill Him. This confirms that Jesus had gained sufficient renown as to be recognizable in social settings. He could not hide when in

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Jerusalem. The verse also reiterates the authorities' desire to kill Jesus, a theme introduced in 5:18, but intensified in John 7 & 8 (7:1,19,20,25; 8:22,37,40).

Verse 26: Knowing the authorities wanted to kill Jesus but observing Him speaking publicly, the Jerusalemites wondered why the authorities were saying nothing to Him. The phrase *speaking publicly* renders a Greek construction meaning "to speak boldly" or "to speak with confidence." Though Jesus had a price on His head, He continued teaching in the public areas of the temple complex and other environs around Jerusalem.

Verse 27: Almost as if John wanted us to experience the original crowd's indecisiveness about Jesus, he related how they corrected their thinking that Jesus was the Messiah by affirming His place of origin. In collectivistic societies like the one Jesus lived in, to know a person's family and place of origin facilitated "sizing one up" with regard to claims of honor. To be "the Messiah" would be to claim the highest social status of all in New Testament Jerusalem.

The statement *we know where this man is from* negated a tenet of their messianic theology that nobody will know where He is from. The same social phenomenon was at work when Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth (Matthew 13:54-58). The phrase *when the Messiah comes* underscored the first century theological expectation that the Jewish Messiah was anticipated highly.

Verse 28: The reference to Jesus teaching in the temple complex confirmed the issue of Jesus being the Messiah was being discussed in public by the crowd. The phrase *cried out* could mean "to scream" and carried a sense of urgency. When Jesus cried out, He was asserting His control over a situation that could have gotten out of hand very quickly. Jesus acknowledged they knew Him and they knew where He was from. Yet, unlike normal circumstances where knowing a person's identity and hometown, was paramount to putting them in their place, Jesus redirected their thinking to a higher plain.

First, He asserted, *I have not come on my own*. He was sent on a mission. Therefore, He was not to be judged by the usual social associations of knowing a man's name, parents, and hometown. Second, The One who sent Him is true, meaning dependable or trustworthy. The people were incapable of truly discerning whether Jesus was the Messiah based on knowing His family of origin or hometown. Neither of these things was of ultimate importance.

They lacked one bit of crucial information; they did not know who had sent Jesus. He told the crowd, *You don't know Him*. In this case, *Him* refers to God the Father. The Greek employs both the second person pronoun and the second person verb to emphasize their ignorance. An emphatic translation might be, "You all, for your part, do not know Him." Their ignorance of God provided the basis for Jesus' mission in the first place. Jesus came to reveal God the Father to the world (1:18).

Verse 29: In contrast, Jesus asserted *I know Him because I am from Him*. Jesus' firsthand knowledge was precisely the corrective needed for a Judaism that had bogged down in excessive legalism and ritual. The people knew Jesus was from Nazareth, but they had no idea He also was from God. Further, not only was Jesus from Him, He sent Jesus. The mission and message of Jesus was all about helping people find their way back to God the Father. Only Jesus could point them in the right direction. He alone was really from God.

Verse 30: Jesus' assertion that He was from God riled many in the crowd and they tried to seize Him. Yet, John suggested they were prevented supernaturally because His hour had not yet come. In John, Jesus' hour refers to His passion and resurrection. First mentioned by Jesus in 2:4, His hour did not arrive until the Greeks sought to see Jesus (12:20-28). By selflessly dying on the cross, Jesus glorified God and opened the way for Jews and Greeks (non-Jews) to come to the Father.

Verse 31: The people were divided over Jesus' identity; many from the crowd believed in Him. The verb *believed* is the same Greek word, *pisteuō*, we encountered in 3:16 and other passages. The verb means "to entrust oneself to someone or something." They questioned whether the Messiah, if He were someone other than Jesus, would perform more signs than Jesus had done. For this group of believers, Jesus' past works were sufficient to convince them He really was from God.

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3. WE CAN UNDERSTAND JESUS' TEACHING (JOHN 7:33-36)

Verse 33: In our first two lesson passages Jesus answered questions people were asking about Him. Then, just as the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple police to arrest Him (7:32), He uttered a statement that perplexed the crowd. First, He said, "I am only with you for a short time." Some might have taken Him to mean He was leaving Jerusalem immediately after the Festival of Tabernacles to return home.

Verse 34: Jesus further baffled the crowd by stating, *they would not find Him even though they would look for Him*. In the previous chapter of John, the people looked for Jesus the day after He fed the 5,000 and they eventually found Him in Capernaum (6:23-25). However, Jesus was indicating He was about to depart in a short while, and though they would look, they would not find Him.

Jesus told the crowds, *and where I am, you cannot come*. They had been successful in following Him around the Sea of Galilee, but they would not be able to come to or find Him this time. What was Jesus trying to convey? Jesus wanted His hearers to know that the special place of being in the presence of Father God cannot be found by traversing the physical landscape from one ministry point to another. He sought to foster a spiritual relationship that transcended physical boundaries and united human hearts with the heart of His Father in heaven.

Verse 35: As the crowd contemplated the meaning of Jesus' words, they asked themselves, *where does He intend to go so we won't find Him?* They were still thinking within the confines of His earthly ministry. They were searching for an answer to their own question and suggested it by way of another question. They questioned whether He intended to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks also.

The term *Dispersion* renders the Greek *Diaspora*, and originally referred to the Jews scattered in predominantly Gentile lands. The reference to *Greeks* appears only here and in 12:20 in John. The term could refer to Hellenistic Jews living in Gentile lands or to non-Jews. The connection to the term *Dispersion* perhaps tips toward Hellenistic Jews in this context. In essence, they wondered if Jesus was going to teach Jews in distant lands where they would be unable to track Him down. Interestingly, though Jesus Himself had only a few forays into lands outside His own, the Jews' contemplation of Him going to the Dispersion foreshadowed the ministry to the Gentiles taken up in earnest by the apostle Paul.

Verse 36: This verse reiterates the bewilderment the crowd experienced as they sought to understand Jesus' teaching. As believers who are commissioned to share our testimonies and to promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we need to remind ourselves that people often feel confused about His teachings.

HIT THE LIGHTS

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 3

WHAT YOU NEED

- > This week's lesson on pages 22-23 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert
- > Refer to "Quoteworthy" on page 22 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert for a supplemental element to enhance your lesson.

HIGHLIGHTS

This lesson is Jesus' teaching with regard to judgment. Its emphasis is on having a better understanding about God's judgment. The lesson encourages college students to live in light of God's judgment.

SCRIPTURE

John 8:12,15-18,23-27,42-47

GETTING STARTED

John 8 includes one of the best examples of Jesus teaching about His purpose in the world. Jesus came to be the Light of the world, scaring away the darkness and exposing everything for what it truly is. A sober look at our lives helps us celebrate Jesus' power to expose sin and lead people out of it.

What did Jesus do for the Jewish people — and all of us — when He came into the world?

What activities do you prefer to do in the light?

What activities do you prefer to do in the darkness?

My mother always said, "Nothing good happens after midnight." Darkness provides cover for anything we're ashamed to do in the light. Light brings judgment and exposure, so it encourages us to be on our best behavior, but darkness can encourage the worst.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1. IDENTIFY THE TRUE JUDGE

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:12,15-18.

12 Then Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."

15 You judge by human standards. I judge no one. **16** And if I do judge, My judgment is true, because I am not alone, but I and the Father who sent Me judge together. **17** Even in your law it is written that the witness of two men is valid. **18** I am the One who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me."

Light gives life, shows us what's wrong and right, and it allows us to succeed. Jesus came as the Light of the world to help us make better choices and experience life to the fullest.

Where has Jesus provided this light for you?

What is something you do that's a direct result of following Christ?

Give an example of a situation where you tried to prevent Jesus' light from showing.

How has Jesus' light provided judgment for your sin?

2. IDENTIFY THE IMPORTANCE OF JUDGMENT

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:23-27.

23 "You are from below," He told them, "I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. **24** Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." **25** "Who are You?" they questioned. "Precisely what I've been telling you from the very beginning," Jesus told them. **26** "I have many things to say and to judge about you, but the One who sent Me is true, and what I have heard from Him — these things I tell the world." **27** They did not know He was speaking to them about the Father.

Jesus has a broader perspective because He's the Creator of life — clearly He knows how best to live. Although God's direction sometimes feels like judgment, we must remember He's simply showing us the path to life and helping us avoid eternal death.

What does it mean to be judgmental?

What does it mean to focus on Jesus as a teacher instead of a judge?

How does it affect your understanding of God's love knowing He sent a teacher to show us how to live?

3. IDENTIFY THE BASIS OF JUDGMENT

> **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:42-47.**

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, because I came from God and I am here. For I didn't come on My own, but He sent Me. **43** Why don't you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to My word. **44** You are of your father the Devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of liars. **45** Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. **46** Who among you can convict Me of sin? If I tell the truth, why don't you believe Me? **47** The one who is from God listens to God's words. This is why you don't listen, because you are not from God."

People will either accept or reject God's guidance. Loving the light of God's guidance in your life means you trust that He knows what He's talking about and choosing to make the right corrections as His light exposes the need.

When was a time you were thankful to experience correction?

How well do you accept guidance from other people? Is it different than accepting guidance from God?

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Briefly evaluate the different areas of your life against Scripture. Choose one thing you're struggling with. As a group, share your struggles and partner with another group member in praying for each other this week.

OPTION 2:

Sometimes we know what we're doing is wrong because we find ourselves standing close enough to God's light to see it. Keep a journal of times when you're judgmental throughout the week about things that don't line up with Scripture. Take time each evening to pray and ask God to change your attitude about the things you wrote down.

PRAY

God, thank you so much for sending Your Son into the world, so we don't have to stumble in the darkness. Help us to grown in Your guidance through Jesus Christ, and apply it to our lives this week. Amen.

NEXT WEEK

> Read next week's lesson, "Believing the Unbelievable," on pages 24-25 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible®* pull-out insert.

BACKGROUND

Jesus forgave a woman caught in adultery to emphasize that all of us have sinned. We should not throw stones at others but rather seek Jesus as the Light of our world. Jesus warned people they would die in their sins if they did not believe in Him. He spoke the truth to recalcitrant religious leaders because He spoke of what He saw in the presence of His Father (8:38). The leaders sought to stone Jesus because He claimed to exist before father Abraham did. He spoke eternal truth that their legalism had screened from the common people.

1. IDENTIFY THE TRUE JUDGE (JOHN 8:12, 15-18)

Verse 12: Jesus identified Himself as the light of the world. In John's Gospel, *light* represents God and good; *darkness* and *night* represent evil. John wrote of Jesus, "Life was in Him, and that life was the light of men" (1:4). He also wrote, "That light shines in the darkness, yet the darkness did not overcome it" (1:5). When Judas departed the supper to betray Jesus John poignantly said, "And it was night" (13:30). Just before Jesus healed the man blind from birth, He repeated His claim, "I am the light of the world" (9:5).

The Pharisees invalidated Jesus' testimony as being based solely upon self-assertion, a violation of the honor code of first century Judaism (8:13). Jesus responded by asserting the validity of His testimony by referring to His origin (8:14). John's readers had been informed Jesus was the eternal Word or *Logos*, but the Pharisees were woefully ignorant. Jesus, not the Pharisees, knew the true nature of God's judgment and the exact condition of each human heart.

Verse 15: Jesus told the Pharisees, *You judge by human standards*. The verb *judge*, derives from the Greek *krino* and means "to decide." Thus Jesus accused the Pharisees of deciding based on human standards, literally "according to the flesh." Human standards suffer from short-sightedness, limited knowledge, and perversion to advance personal interests. Living or judging by human standards contrasts sharply with living by God's Spirit. Therefore only God can be the true Judge, because He alone knows all things and is free from sinful ambitions.

Jesus' statement, *I judge no one*, placed Him opposite of the Pharisees who deliberately judged everyone. Notably, the verb *judge*, carried the idea "to condemn." Unlike the Pharisees who condemned people based on the tenets of their rules and regulations, the human standards, Jesus condemned no one.

Verse 16: In this verse, Jesus declared His judgment is true because His judgment was backed by the Father. Though Jesus did not come to condemn people, any judgment He "could give" would be nonetheless valid. Note once again how Jesus' words had their origin in the One who sent Him.

Verse 17: To support His claim, Jesus called the Pharisees' attention to their law. Their law stated the witness of two men is valid. Jesus based His claim on Deuteronomy 19:15, which required the witness of two or three people before judicial action could take place. Jesus' reminder to the Pharisees of the legal requirements of the law undergirded His statement that both He and the Father bore witness to the truth (8:16). Earlier Jesus had produced several witnesses to His truth claims, including John the Baptist, Jesus' works, the Father's testimony, and Scripture (5:33-47). The Pharisees sought to condemn (judge; *krinō*) Jesus because they felt He dishonored Himself by being a self-witness. They willfully ignored the other witnesses that supported His claims.

Verse 18: Jesus refused to let the clouded thinking of the Pharisees to stand as the truth. Thus He boldly reasserted His truth claims were based on two witnesses: His testimony and His Father's. Since the Father was the One who sent Jesus and since the Father testified about Jesus, Jesus was above the judgment and condemnation of the wicked Pharisees. By so doing, Jesus contrasted the false judgment of the Pharisees with the true judgment of the true Judge, God.

COMMENTARY

2. IDENTIFY THE IMPORTANCE OF JUDGMENT (JOHN 8:23-27)

Verse 23: The One who sent Jesus is the true Judge of all humanity. In the present verse, Jesus showed how important it is to know the true Judge. The Pharisees, as all people, are from below. Jesus is from above. John loved to make use of the concept of the world above and this world below (see 3:31; 19:11). Both literally and metaphorically speaking, Jesus had a higher vantage point and thus superior perspective than the Pharisees. He alone had come from God and was going to God (8:14; 13:3; 16:28).

The phrase *this world* occurs for the first of 12 times in John. *This world* refers to the place of sinful humanity, the activity of Satan, suffering, and the focus of God's judgment (9:39; 12:31; 16:33). *This world* also marks the place where Jesus shines as "the light of this world" (11:9). Yet, Jesus told Pilate moments before His crucifixion, His kingdom was not of this world (18:36).

Verse 24: The phrase *you will die* in your sins occurs twice in this verse for emphasis. The first occurrence was a reminder from Jesus to all people of the spiritual reality of death that applies to all sinners. The second occurrence magnified Jesus condition *if you do not believe that I am He*. The verb rendered *you will die* and all occurrences of the pronoun *you* are plural. Jesus was addressing all the Pharisees and by extension, all people, who refused to believe in Him.

The phrase *I am He* renders the Greek *ego eimi*, the so-called "I am," reminiscent of the Lord's response to Moses (Exodus 3:14). As we have seen before, the verb *believe*, *pisteuo*, means "to entrust one's self to someone or something." *Entrusting* includes more than mental assent to theological propositions. It also involves more than personal relations as Gangel points out. To believe is to entrust one's life to Jesus, accepting Him in the highest view possible. Accepting Jesus as a first century Jewish moral teacher carries no salvific value. Rather, as John pointed out repeatedly, Jesus must be entrusted with one's life as the Son of God who is the eternal *Logos* and who is Himself God. Those who fail to believe in Jesus in the light of the highest Christology will die in their sins. Knowing death is guaranteed for sinners makes being aware of the importance of judgment absolutely crucial for time and eternity.

Verse 25: This verse demonstrates the back-and-forth nature of the heated exchange between the Pharisees and Jesus: they questioned; He told them. Their question, *Who are you*, was dismissive, designed to belittle Jesus, and should be understood more as an insult than a serious query. The phrase *from the beginning* indicates Jesus remained consistent in His presentation, He had stated and restated His position, and He grew impatient with their misjudgment. The Pharisees were so convinced of their own importance, they failed to understand the importance of God's ultimate judgment.

Verse 26: Jesus still had many things to say and to judge about the Pharisees, and about the human condition. However, in the face of their opposition, He felt it more important to reassert that the One who sent Him was true. Jesus reminded them once again, these things He was telling the world, He first heard from Him.

Verse 27: True to their spiritually insensitive natures, the Pharisees did not know Jesus was speaking to them about the Father. Only an acknowledgment of God as the true Judge could result in people understanding the importance of judgment. After all, if they did not live to please God, how could they expect to fare well when He judged them?

3. IDENTIFY THE BASIS OF JUDGMENT (JOHN 8:42-47)

Verse 42: The Pharisees believed adherence to the law made them righteous in God's eyes. Therefore, keeping the religious law was the basis of judgment from their perspective. In contrast, Jesus contended one way for demonstrating God was one's Father was to love the One He sent. Yet, clearly the Pharisees rejected Jesus. Jesus' entire ministry was based on people realizing God sent Him. Thus He came from God. He had not come on His own.

Verse 43: We can feel Jesus' frustration as He asked the religious leaders, *Why don't you understand what I say?* He then answered His own question; He said, *Because you cannot listen to My word*. The phrase *cannot listen* renders the Greek for "you are not able

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to hear." People who denied Jesus was sent by God and came from God were not able to hear what Jesus had to say. They did not understand because they refused to listen to His word. Another way for demonstrating God was one's Father was to listen to Jesus' word. The Pharisees failed at this.

Verse 44: Since the Pharisees refused to love Jesus and to receive Him as the One sent by God to come into this world, Jesus declared the Devil was their father. Just as Jesus came to carry out His Father's will, so the religious leaders sought to carry out their father's desire. The Greek term for *Devil* is *diabolos* and means "slanderer" or "accuser." Jesus further identified the Devil by His actions; he was a murderer from the beginning and he has not stood in the truth.

The reference to *murderer* might have been prompted by Jesus' approaching crucifixion. Since He first healed the sick man at the pool of Bethesda, the Jews had sought to kill Jesus. The notion of the religious leaders wanting to kill Jesus was clearly on our Lord's mind as He spoke (8:37,40). Additionally, the Devil has no truth in him. Jesus said lying was the Devil's own nature and that he was a liar and the father of lies. Yet, as we have seen, divine judgment has "truth" as its basis. Jesus knew through lies and deception, the Jewish leaders could have Him killed, but ultimate judgment was in God's hand and the basis of that judgment was truth.

Verse 45: The logical consequence of the Pharisees having the Devil as their father and seeking to carry out his will was that they did not believe Jesus when He told them the truth. In the context of this passage, the truth represents everything Jesus had revealed about God, His Father (1:18). The Pharisees judged Jesus and sought to have Him killed. For His part, Jesus warned them that God's judgment would be based on the truth He had tried to tell them all along.

Verse 46: . Jesus' question, *Who among you can convict Me of sin*, served to reiterate that God's judgment would have truth as its basis. Jesus alone was telling the truth surrounded by the Pharisees that day. He questioned them, *If I tell the truth, why don't you believe Me?* His question is a double assertion. First, He asserted He was speaking the truth. Second, He asserted the Pharisees did not believe Him. Behind this conflict was the ongoing clash between God and the Devil. Jesus followed God, but the Pharisees unwittingly followed the Devil. They had substituted the Devil's lies in the place of God's truth, which Jesus had tried to share.

Verse 47: Jesus' axiom, *the one who is from God listens to God's words*, perfectly described the origin and nature of His own teaching ministry. This maxim portrayed Jesus as the obedient Son of the Father who sent Him. Thus, God is both Jesus' sender and the source of Jesus' words. This truth also informs us how to identify the basis of judgment. God will not judge us capriciously or arbitrarily. Instead, He speaks the truth to us, especially through Jesus. The person considered as belonging to God or being from Him, listens to God's words, just as Jesus did.



BELIEVING THE UNBELIEVABLE

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 10

WHAT YOU NEED

- > This week's lesson on pages 24-25 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert
- > Refer to "On the Web" on page 24 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible*® pull-out insert for a supplemental element to enhance your lesson.

HIGHLIGHTS

This lesson describes various responses to Jesus' healing of a man born blind. Its emphasis is on resolving doubts people have regarding Jesus and what He can do. The lesson encourages college students to trust in Jesus' power.

SCRIPTURE

John 9:8-11,13-17,35-41

GETTING STARTED

We've had incredible advances in medicine and medical research, but we can't give sight to the blind simply by having a blind man wash his face. Jesus brought heaven to earth, and with that came the power of God healing His creation. Jesus didn't focus on why something was wrong, He just made it right. Though His actions are sometimes unbelievable, we must remember to respond appropriately when Jesus acts.

Have students share incredible life stories. Ask them to focus on stories that credit God directly (like healing and provision in time of need).

How do we know these stories are real?

How does something this incredible happen? Why doesn't it happen more?

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1. FEELING UNCERTAIN

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:8-11.

8 His neighbors and those who formerly had seen him as a beggar said, "Isn't this the man who sat begging?" **9** Some said, "He's the one." "No," others were saying, "but he looks like him." He kept saying, "I'm the one!" **10** Therefore they asked him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" **11** He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So when I went and washed I received my sight."

Many times, we have "only God" situations in our lives where the only way something could've been made right was if God Himself stepped in to fix it.

How do you respond when God does something completely unbelievable?

How have you used the incredible work of God to share His love with others?

What's something huge in your life right now that you need Jesus' miraculous power to overcome or endure?

2. RESISTING THE TRUTH

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:13-17.

13 They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. **14** The day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. **15** So again the Pharisees asked him how he received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," he told them. "I washed and I can see." **16** Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He doesn't keep the Sabbath!" But others were saying, "How can a sinful man perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. **17** Again they asked the blind man, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" "He's a prophet," he said.

When we become complacent in our faith, we focus on following the rules instead of living out God's love. God is more concerned with us showing His love (the purpose of His law) instead of just keeping a checklist.

What part of your religious structure focuses more on processes instead of the purpose for your actions?

How do you balance the importance of getting things done versus doing them with the right attitude?

How do you react when Christ-followers around you are ministering in a way that's outside the cultural norm?

BELIEVING THE UNBELIEVABLE

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 10

3. REFUSING TO SEE

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:35-41.

35 When Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, He found him and asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" **36** "Who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?" he asked. **37** Jesus answered, "You have seen Him; in fact, He is the One speaking with you." **38** "I believe, Lord!" he said, and he worshiped Him. **39** Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind." **40** Some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and asked Him, "We aren't blind too, are we?" **41** "If you were blind," Jesus told them, "you wouldn't have sin. But now that you say, 'We see' — your sin remains.

There's a huge difference between someone who knows what's wrong yet does it anyway and someone who unknowingly does what's wrong. Jesus addressed that here and talked about how His purpose is to help the ignorant see the truth and blind those who are willfully disobedient.

What did God mean when He said, "those who see will become blind"? What does God expect of us?

How often do you act in opposition to His expectations?

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Do you ever feel blind in your faith? It can be a struggle to share the gospel when we feel as if we're still learning it ourselves. The challenge here is to find someone who's further along in their faith journey, so they can teach and hold you accountable. Identify people in your life whom you'd consider to have "sight" when it comes to what God desires in your life. This could be an elder at church, a campus minister, or even a friend who's obviously walking with Jesus daily. After identifying them, ask them to mentor you.

OPTION 2:

Sometimes we refuse to believe God works in unbelievable ways. The challenge for you then is to investigate. Spend some time this week investigating the unbelievable acts of God in this world. Some of them may be man's invention, but you might be surprised to find that God still works in miraculous ways. Start with prayer and ask God to lift your ignorance and prejudice. Then do some legwork, investigating the miraculous claims. God works in incredible ways every day, and it will be faith-building to learn about more of these experiences.

PRAY

Thank God for His Word and the stories of faith and healing. He's a God interested in loving people, and we long to experience that love and share it

BACKGROUND

Though Jesus healed a man blind from birth, many people doubted whether he was really the same man. The Pharisees resisted the truth of the formerly blind man's testimony, casting dispersion on Jesus and calling both Jesus and the man "sinners." Jesus told the Pharisees their sin remained because they refused to see the truth.

1. FEELING UNCERTAIN (JOHN 9:8-11)

Verse 8: The phrases *his neighbors* and *those who formerly had seen him* served to verify the man in question had been actually blind and had spent his days as a beggar. Their question, *Isn't this the man who sat begging*, conveyed both wonder and doubt. They probably thought a man blind from birth would never be able to see. Therefore, though this man looked like the blind beggar they formerly had seen, they had difficulty accepting he was the same man.

Verse 9: This verse gives three views about the healed man by those in attendance that day. First, some of the neighbors and others who had seen him when he was a blind beggar affirmed He's the one. They might not have understood how he gained his sight, but for these witnesses, there was no question he was the same person.

Second, another group denied he was the same man but said he looks like him. Their response served as an explanation about how the man could see. A simple mistake in identity had led to confusing a man who could see for a beggar who could not see. They reasoned there were two men similar in appearance.

Third, there was the man himself. He kept saying, "I'm the one!" The verbal construction *kept saying* accurately renders the Greek imperfect verb. Apparently, the man repeatedly tried to convince the people he really was the formerly blind beggar. We almost can hear his loud affirmations as he said again and again, "I'm the one! I'm the one!"

Verse 10: The pronoun *they* probably referred to those in the crowd who were not convinced he was the formerly blind beggar. Their question, *Then how were your eyes opened*, could be taken as raw skepticism or as pure wonder. If taken as raw skepticism, then they wanted him to prove the impossible. If taken as pure wonder, then they wanted him to help them understand how such a marvelous turn of events could have happened to him.

Verse 11: The formerly blind man's testimony was direct and free from theological jargon. He simply told it like it happened. He gave Jesus credit by telling what He did and said. Jesus made mud and spread it on his eyes. Then Jesus commanded the man, *Go to Siloam and wash*. *Siloam* means "sent" (9:7) and was the name of the pool at the southern tip of Jerusalem. Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus referred to Himself as the One "sent" from God. The meaning of the pool's name served as a point of connection with the ministry of Jesus. Healing came as a result of trusting obedience. Jesus said go, so the man went. Jesus said wash, so the man washed. The man took Jesus at His word, did what He said, and as a result he received sight. I've always loved the fact that the Greek verb, *anablepō*, can mean "to receive sight" or "to look up." Figuratively speaking, things were "looking up" for this man when he received sight for the first time in his life.

2. RESISTING THE TRUTH (JOHN 9:13-17)

Verse 13: We are not told why the people brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. When John wrote his Gospel in the late first century A.D. the Sadducees had ceased to exist. John's readers would have been more familiar with the Pharisees, who possibly represent the group out of which Jesus' enemies arose.

Verse 14: This verse serves as a terse reminder of the legalistic religious system in place during the days of Jesus' ministry. This system placed a higher value on keeping Sabbath regulations than on helping people. The day Jesus made mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. From the Pharisees point of view, Jesus should not have been "making" or "opening"

anything. Just as some of the formerly blind man's neighbors denied a miracle and claimed the man before them *just looked like the blind beggar*, so also the Pharisees would deny Jesus performed this spectacular miracle by applying a legalistic Sabbath restriction.

Verse 15: The Pharisees asked the man, as his neighbors had asked earlier, how he received his sight. The man responded by simply rehearsing what he had said earlier, *He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and I can see*. The pronoun *He* refers to Jesus, though our Lord is not named in this verse. No doubt the crowd had told the Pharisees what had happened and had mentioned Jesus to them already.

One slight difference in the formerly blind man's testimony here from what he said earlier is in the verb *see*. The verb is different (*blepō*, "to see" instead of *anablepō*, "to receive sight"). The verb form emphasizes ongoing action. I can see also could be translated "I continually see" or "I am seeing."

Verse 16: The Pharisees were at a loss as to how to explain such an extraordinary miracle. They feared acknowledging the miracle surely meant they would have to support and follow Jesus also. They resisted the truth by immediately trying to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the public. They declared *This man is not from God*, a blatant denial of one of Jesus' consistent claims (6:46; 8:42). Had the Pharisees been right that Jesus really was not from God, the integrity of His miracles and the meaning of His message would have been lost. Such is the way the Devil works through religious leaders who are out of touch with God (8:44).

Instead, they used the flimsiest of all excuses to resist the obvious truth that Jesus had healed a man blind from birth. They cited the technicality *He doesn't keep the Sabbath!* The clear implication is that if Jesus is not from God as evidenced by His not keeping the Sabbath, then His miraculous power must be either demonic or fake. Yet, Jesus did keep the Sabbath, not in the legalistic way of the Pharisees, but in the deeper spiritual way of helping people in need.

Some among the Pharisees did not want to take the legalistic shortcut of ruling Jesus' miracle out of line just because He performed on the Sabbath. They questioned, *How can a sinful man perform such signs?* As a result, there was division among them.

Verse 17: The Pharisees pressed the formerly blind man for additional information specifically focused on Jesus. They asked, *What do you say about Him since He opened your eyes?* In vain, they were searching for any reason to resist the truth. They hoped they could hear some incriminating information against Jesus. The blind man, though not a theologian, had begun to think theologically. He responded, *He's a prophet*. For the Jewish people, a prophet was a messenger from God. Some prophets, like Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, were granted extraordinary powers to help people. To this formerly blind man, Jesus seemed to fit the bill. His words and works had power to change lives for the better. The Pharisees chose to resist the truth about Jesus; the formerly blind man knew better and told everyone so!

3. REFUSING TO SEE (JOHN 9:35-41)

Verse 35: This verse makes a powerful statement about religion and relationship. Jesus heard the Pharisees had thrown the man out. They banned him from the synagogue because he refused to adhere to their version of what happened. Non-adherents were not welcomed in their legalistic religion.

Jesus found him. Our Lord never tires of building relationships between sinners and God, especially those who do not measure up to the man-made standards of religion. Whenever a church or religious group creates legalistic standards for people to follow, they feel compelled to enforce the rules and to keep unqualified people out. Jesus came to show people how to enter into a relationship with God. Jesus asked the man, *Do you believe in the Son of Man?*

Verse 36: The man's response mirrored his earlier childlike obedience when Jesus told him to go and wash. Unlike the Pharisees who refused to see, this man wanted to see everything. Therefore he trustingly asked Jesus *Who is He, that I may believe in Him?* The man showed an eagerness to believe in the Son of Man; he just needed Jesus to point his seeing eyes in the right direction.

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Verse 37: In a beautiful moment in the story, Jesus said, *You have seen Him*. The physical reality of gaining his sight earlier in the day prepared him for a deeper spiritual sight presently. Jesus further clarified for the man the Son of Man was the One speaking with him. Never had the formerly blind man seen things so clearly. Perhaps for the first time since receiving his sight (as great as that was), he realized that spiritual sight is much preferred. After all, he had survived many years, coping with physical blindness, but spiritual blindness would result in eternal death.

Verse 38: The man responded by saying *I believe, Lord!* He then followed his statement of faith with an act of worship. The Greek term rendered *worshiped* means “to fall down prostrate” or “to revere.” In a short time, this man had gone from being totally blind, to seeing Jesus as a prophet giving physical sight, to seeing Him in the fullest spiritual sense as his Lord.

Verse 39: Jesus used the man’s conversion as an occasion to state His mission. He came into this world for judgment. The Greek term *krima*, referred to a legal setting in which a verdict was reached. Jesus did not specifically come to judge people (*krino*; 3:17). However, His coming enabled and required people to make a decision. How they decided would determine the verdict for or against them. Specifically, Jesus came as a light shining in the darkness (1:5).

The phrase *those who do not see* referred to those who knew of their own spiritually wretched condition. Jesus said they will see. Conversely, the phrase *those who do see* referred to people like the Pharisees who adopted their own legalistic religion as the path to right relationship with God. In spiritual terms, a legalistic religion darkens a person’s soul. Thus, those who think they see will become blind.

Verse 40: Some inquisitive Pharisees overheard Jesus’ comments to the formerly blind man. They asked Jesus, *We aren’t blind too, are we?* Apparently they thought some people could be spiritually blind just as Jesus said, but surely He did not include them on that list, did He?

Verse 41: Jesus was blunt in His reply, tying the conversation of blindness to the one thing that separated people from God, sin. *Sin* represented any form of rebellion or disobedience against God. People could not have their sins forgiven or removed merely by following man-made religious precepts. Had the Pharisees admitted they were blind spiritually, Jesus could have helped them by taking away their sin. Since they said, *We see*, they forfeited any benefit they might have had by turning to Jesus. The formerly blind man knew both his physical blindness and later his spiritual blindness. Jesus cured him of both.

PROMISE YOU CAN BELIEVE IN

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 17

WHAT YOU NEED

- > This week's lesson on pages 26-27 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible®* pull-out insert
- > Refer to "For Further Study" on page 26 of *Collegiate's Fall 2013 Explore the Bible®* pull-out insert for a supplemental element to enhance your lesson.

HIGHLIGHTS

This lesson is Jesus' teaching about being the Good Shepherd. It emphasizes the security Jesus provides for those who belong to Him and encourages college students to rely on the security Jesus provides them.

SCRIPTURE

John 10:1-5,7-10,14-18,25-30

GETTING STARTED

Jesus is who He says He is. Most people don't trust that for a number of reasons, and it seems Jesus understands the skepticism. Jesus was consistently who He said He was, unlike other false prophets who claimed to be God or be sent by God. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and regularly demonstrated this was indeed true.

Who are some people who have erroneously claimed special revelation from God?

How have their words and actions proved them false?

PROMISE YOU CAN BELIEVE IN

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 17

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1. WE KNOW HIM

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:1-5.

1 "I assure you: Anyone who doesn't enter the sheep pen by the door but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. **2** The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. **3** The doorkeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they recognize his voice. **5** They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don't recognize the voice of strangers."

When Jesus came into the world, He fulfilled all of the Old Testament prophecies. He wasn't masquerading as something He wasn't. He was who He said He was: the Son of God.

List some evidences that Jesus was who He claimed to be.

When you think about the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), how essential was it that Jesus pass the test?

When reading Jesus' interactions, what evidence do we find that He had both human and divine knowledge setting Him apart?

2. HE DELIVERS THE GOODS

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:7-10.

7 So Jesus said again, "I assure you: I am the door of the sheep. **8** All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn't listen to them. **9** I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. **10** A thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.

The difference lies in delivery. Jesus kept His promise to bring life because He's the Author of life. Frauds always fail to deliver a better life to people because they don't have the power. But Jesus regularly made good on this promise.

In what ways did Jesus deliver on His promise of life?

How have you experienced the gift of full, abundant life from Jesus?

How can you point others to that life?

PROMISE YOU CAN BELIEVE IN

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 17

3. THE PROOF IS IN THE RESURRECTION

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:14-18.

14 "I am the good shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me, **15** as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep. **16** But I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd. **17** This is why the Father loves Me, because I am laying down My life so I may take it up again. **18** No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from My Father."

In a demonstration of His power over life and death, Jesus laid down His life and picked it back up again. This substitutionary sacrifice gives us access to eternal life. Jesus' sacrifice pardons our sin and pays our debt. His resurrection proves He has the power to restore life if we're willing to place our trust in Him.

What's the difference in blindly trusting someone and trusting someone based on proof? Which are you more likely to do?

Where has Jesus shown His ability to create in your life (apart from His creation of your life)?

How has Jesus restored and sustained you?

In what way has God influenced you to be creative?

4. SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 10:25-30.

25 "I did tell you and you don't believe," Jesus answered them. "The works that I do in My Father's name testify about Me. **26** But you don't believe because you are not My sheep. **27** My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish — ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **30** The Father and I are one."

Jesus created life, He has power over life, and He promises to give us life abundant. Following Christ means we can trust He'll deliver on His word.

In what areas of your life do you feel secure that God will sustain you?

Describe a time when you actively allowed Jesus to take control of something that was out of your hands.

Who besides Jesus have you tried trusting your life to? Why is Jesus a better option?

COMMENTARY

BACKGROUND

Jesus used the analogy of the shepherd and his sheep to describe the special relationship between Him and His followers. He promised to save and to give abundant life to those who entrusted themselves to Him. Jesus guaranteed complete security for those who followed Him. Everyone who encountered Jesus had to choose to believe and follow Him or to disbelieve and oppose Him. We have the same choices.

1. WE KNOW HIM (JOHN 10:1-5)

Verse 1: The sheep pen was an enclosure comprised of a cave, a wall, or a fence of some type. The door was the controlled access opening allowing sheep in and out of the pen. Typically, shepherds kept their sheep corralled in order to protect them and provide them basic security from wild animals. Occasionally, a thief or robber might try to sneak into the sheep pen from another direction in order to steal a sheep. Jesus emphasized the evil character of such people by using the synonyms thief and robber together.

Verse 2: In sharp contrast to the thief and robber, the shepherd of the sheep enters by the door. The door was the only place of legitimate activity. By extension, the only legitimate leader of the sheep was the shepherd who enters by the door.

Verse 3: Having established the point of legitimacy, Jesus then described the normal, everyday routine. The doorkeeper was in charge of attending the door or gate and thus access to the sheep. He acknowledged the shepherd's legitimacy and granted him unfettered access to the sheep. The sheep represent God's people. In the world of shepherding, the shepherd developed a relationship with his sheep whereby they came to recognize or hear his voice. Sheep gained a sense of security from the one who constantly provided green pastures, still waters, and a secure place to bed down.

The idea of calling his own sheep by name underscores the special relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. The idea of naming sheep also indicates the shepherd took more than a casual interest in the flock. Jesus said the shepherd leads them out. As secure as sheep might be in the sheep pen, they must go out to feed and to drink. Once outside the protection of the sheep pen, the sheep depend on their shepherd for security. His rod, staff, and slingshot, were all that stood between the sheep and ravenous wolves or lions.

Verse 4: After all the sheep exit the pen, the shepherd gets in front of the flock and leads the sheep by going ahead of them. The verb *follow* is important in the Gospel of John (1:43; 8:12; 10:27; 12:26; 21:19,22). From the first to the last chapter of John, Jesus was inviting someone to follow Him. His invitation provides access to true and lasting security.

Verse 5: Jesus returned to the theme of the sheep's refusal to follow a stranger. In this analogy, Jesus no doubt thought of each religious leader as a stranger seeking to mislead the sheep. What made this situation so hideous was the religious leaders' ability to veil their deception in religious words and platitudes about the Scripture and Moses. Just as a sheep will run away from a stranger, Jesus knew people would abandon the misguided man-made legalistic religious system in favor of the truth He presented. History has proven Jesus right.

Jesus described the character of a shepherd who takes good care of his sheep, emphasizing the shepherd's leadership of the flock, to prepare His audience for His declaration about His being the Good Shepherd.

2. HE DELIVERS THE GOODS (JOHN 10:7-10)

Verse 7: Having finished His analogy of the shepherd and the sheep, Jesus applied it to His own situation. He began by marking His comments as an important pronouncement by utilizing the words *I assure you*. This introductory formula employs the "double amen" construction we have noted in previous lessons. The formula occurs 25 times in John's Gospel.

Then Jesus uttered the third of His "I am" sayings recorded in John's Gospel. *I am the*

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door refers back to His analogy of the sheep pen with the door being the only legitimate place of activity (10:1-2). Clearly the descriptive phrase *of the sheep* refers to people. In making this statement, Jesus was claiming to be the only legitimate access to God for people needing forgiveness, life, and security. No one could go into the security of the sheep pen or out to find food and water, except through Him. Jesus restated the same concept in 14:6 by saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

Verse 8: Who did Jesus have in mind when He referred to *all who came before Me*? He was referring to any and all errant religious leaders. The attachment of the terms *thieves* and *robbers* harkens back to His analogy in 10:1 and in context referred to the blind religious leaders addressed in 9:40-41. Jesus' assertion the sheep didn't listen to them suggested the problem was not God's plan of redemption but rather in the legalistic substitute that had developed over many years (see Isaiah 29:13). Sheep learn to recognize and trust the voice of the true shepherd based on the shepherd's ability to provide food, water, and shelter.

Verse 9: Jesus repeated His pronouncement (10:7), *I am the door*. On this second mention, He spoke of the benefits for those who followed Him. His condition, *if anyone enters by Me*, meant "to entrust their lives to Him," "to believe in Him," or "to accept His claims as Messiah, the Son of God (20:31). The first benefit is that they will be saved. The Greek verb *sōzō* means "to be rescued," "to be liberated," or "to be preserved." In a word, security!

Extending the analogy of the sheep, Jesus spoke of a second benefit, one that lasted the entire life of the sheep. They will come in (security) and go out and find pasture (nurture). All the sheep needed, the shepherd provided.

Verse 10: Jesus compared the motives of the thief to His own motives. The thief's motives were summarized in three words: steal, kill, and destroy. All three terms are negative and fatal to the sheep. In the sharpest contrast, Jesus' motive was to give life and to give it in abundance.

3. THE PROOF IS IN THE RESURRECTION (JOHN 10:14-18)

Verse 14: Continuing His application of the shepherd-sheep analogy, Jesus declared *I am the good shepherd*. This is the fourth of the seven "I am" sayings in John. Jesus actually shifted His emphasis from being "the door" of the sheep pen to being the good shepherd. Both usages of the verb *know* confirm a present, ongoing relationship between our Lord and those who follow Him.

Verse 15: The verb *know* occurs twice in this verse just as in the previous verse. Once again both occurrences indicate a present, ongoing relationship. Here the focus shifts to the relationship between the Father and Jesus. Taken together, verses 14-15 indicate we can have the same relationship with Jesus and the Father as they have with one another.

Jesus then defined the word "good" from the previous verse. Like a good shepherd, Jesus said, *I will lay down My life for the sheep*. Unlike the thief or robber who "steals, kills, and destroys" (10:10), the Good Shepherd voluntarily lays down His life for the sheep.

Verse 16: The phrase *other sheep not of this fold* has been applied to North Americans and Indians by the Mormons, to Jews who had not yet embraced Jesus as their Messiah, to Jews living outside the Holy Land, and to Gentiles. The strongest probability is that *the other sheep not in this fold* refers to Gentiles. Indeed, in John's Gospel, the coming of the Greeks (Gentiles) signaled to Jesus His "hour" had come to be glorified (12:20-23).

The main idea of the verse centers on the concept of one flock, one shepherd. Jesus is the one shepherd; all who believe in Him make up the one flock. When Jesus said, *I must bring them*, He indicated His active role in reaching out to all sinners whether Jews or Greeks (Gentiles). All true sheep have in common that they listen to the Good Shepherd's voice.

Verse 17: A real danger exists in interpreting Jesus' laying down His life as the cause or reason the Father loves Him. Actually, just the opposite dynamic is in place. A correct understanding is revealed by saying "Because the Father loves me, that is the reason I lay down my life."

Another important aspect of this verse is the emphasis on Jesus voluntarily laying down His life and then being able to take it up again. Here we have a glimpse of Calvary

COMMENTARY

and the empty tomb, with both scenes controlled by Jesus, not the religious leaders or the Romans.

Verse 18: Jesus expounded on His voluntary sacrifice by insisting, *No one takes it from Me*. The statement, *I lay it down on My own*, reiterates the point. The term *right* renders the Greek *exousia*, meaning “authority,” “power,” or “freedom to act.” Jesus then said *I have received this command from My Father*. As usual, Jesus centered His actions and words in the context of doing His Father’s will.

4. SATISFACTION GUARANTEED (JOHN 10:25-30)

Verse 25: Jesus responded to their request by affirming He did tell them. The problem was they did not believe. Once again Jesus appealed to the works He was doing in His Father’s name. He declared those works testify about Me.

Verse 26: Jesus became very blunt. He attributed their unbelief to the fact they were not His sheep. They had refused to enter into the life-saving relationship Jesus offered. He had come as “the true light, who gives light to everyone” (1:9), but not everyone embraced Him. Those who did receive Him He called His sheep.

Verse 27: Jesus once again set out the basic tenets of the relationship He sought with them: hear, know, follow. When people hear the Gospel with faith and receive Christ, they become His. He will know all who entrust themselves to Him. The genuineness of their faith and the sign of their salvation is that they follow Him. These three words, *hear, know, and follow*, are the vocabulary of security.

Verse 28: How do you define security? Jesus used words like *eternal life* and *never perish* — ever. The use of *never* and *ever* with *perish* correctly conveys the emphasis in the Greek text. For added security, Jesus promised, *No one will snatch them out of My hand*.

Verse 29: Jesus honored His Father and praised Him as being greater than all. He then applied the “snatching out of the hands” motif to His Father. The verb *is able* means “to have power.” No one has power to snatch or “steal” believers away from the Father. Remembering the shepherd-sheep analogy, Jesus as the Good Shepherd secures His followers from the spiritual thieves and robbers of this dark world.

Verse 30: Our lesson ends on a high note; Jesus said, “The Father and I are one.” This affirmation is one of the most precise statements of Jesus’ deity in the Bible. Believers can feel secure precisely because the Father and the Son are united in their love for sinners, in their quest to save sinners, and in their very being.

DEATH HAS NO HOLD

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 24

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

1. THE SAVIOR'S PROMISE

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 11:21-27.

21 Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. **22** Yet even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You." **23** "Your brother will rise again," Jesus told her. **24** Martha said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." **25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. **26** Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die — ever. Do you believe this?" **27** "Yes, Lord," she told Him, "I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world."

Martha's faith came not from witnessing a demonstration of Jesus' power, but because He claimed to have it. Lazarus' death was testing Martha's faith, and she held strong to God.

When you think about people with strong faith, who comes to mind?

When have you had a hard time believing God would deliver you from a bad situation?

What has a bigger impact on your ability to trust Jesus — your faith or evidence of His past work? How do you feel about that?

2. THE SAVIOR'S CONCERN

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 11:33-37.

33 When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, He was angry in His spirit and deeply moved. **34** "Where have you put him?" He asked. "Lord," they told Him, "come and see." **35** Jesus wept. **36** So the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" **37** But some of them said, "Couldn't He who opened the blind man's eyes also have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus' righteous anger over Lazarus' death gives us a good picture of how much He loves life and hates sin, which brings death. This anger moved Him to compassion for Lazarus' sisters, and He restored their joy.

Knowing Jesus has power over death, why do we allow things to conquer us and steal our joy?

How can we respond when we know we've allowed sin to rule our life?

Share a time when you were angry enough at sin to call on God to fix it.

When have you experienced God correcting what sin made wrong?

DEATH HAS NO HOLD

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 24

3. THE SAVIOR'S POWER

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 11:38-44.

38 Then Jesus, angry in Himself again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. **39** "Remove the stone," Jesus said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told Him, "Lord, he's already decaying. It's been four days." **40** Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" **41** So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You heard Me. **42** I know that You always hear Me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so they may believe You sent Me." **43** After He said this, He shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" **44** The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him and let him go."

Jesus spoke life into existence. And here in John chapter 11, He spoke life back into Lazarus. Jesus showed God's power by making right what sin made wrong: death.

When dealing with trials, how does this act of Jesus' supreme power give you hope?

How do you hold onto your faith that God will provide promised eternal life?

When faced with the death of a friend or family member, how does your faith bring you strength?

APPLY TO LIFE

OPTION 1:

Fear of death is paralyzing. We experience death in all aspects of our life: the physical deaths of loved ones, but also the death of passion, security, and so forth. Write down the trials and "deaths" you're facing. Ask God to show up in all His power to help you overcome your sin.

Where are you experiencing death right now?

How can Jesus step in and breathe life back into you?

OPTION 2:

We all know people facing death, whether physical or otherwise. Spend some time thinking about who you can share Christ's love with. Come up with ways you can bring them joy. By doing so, you can help Jesus "breathe life" back into them by sharing the abundant life Christ has given you.

BACKGROUND

Death touches every family. Even Lazarus, the beloved friend of Jesus, died. Jesus promised a grieving sister her brother would rise again because He Himself was the resurrection and the life.

Jesus was “deeply moved” when He witnessed the pain and grief others were experiencing over the death of a loved one. He gave the word and the dead man Lazarus walked out of the tomb and back into the land of the living. While Jesus did many believable signs, some people, especially the religious leaders, chose to reject Him and to seek His death.

1. THE SAVIOR’S PROMISE (JOHN 11:21-27)

Verse 21: Martha, one of Lazarus’ sisters, went out to meet Jesus. Her statement, *Lord, if You had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died*, could be taken two ways. Some understand the statement to be a rebuke as if she was asking, “Where have you been?!” A better approach is to take Martha’s statement as an affirmation of her faith in Jesus. Jesus had exhibited extraordinary powers to heal the sick and to give sight to the blind. Had He been in Bethany, He surely could have healed Lazarus too.

Verse 22: Martha’s faith in Jesus did not die with her brother; nor was her faith fully informed. Her affirmation, *that God would give Jesus whatever He asked*, confirmed that her faith in Him was still intact in the midst of personal grief.

Verse 23: Jesus decided to inform her faith by boldly stating, *Your brother will rise again*. The Greek verb rendered *will rise again* derives from the same root as the noun “resurrection.”

Verse 24: Martha revealed both the breadth and the limitation of her theology. As for breadth, Martha believed in God’s power to raise the dead back to life. What a contrast to the Sadducees who held power in Jerusalem. Though the Sadducees were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the people, they did not believe in the resurrection (Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:8). However, though Martha believed in the resurrection, her faith had a major limitation. The resurrection would happen at the last day. The phrase *at the last day* referred to the end of time. Indeed, the word *last* renders the Greek adjective *eschatos* from which we get our theological term “eschatology,” the study of “last things.”

Verse 25: Jesus challenged Martha’s limited theology by identifying Himself as the resurrection and the life. Martha did not have to wait until “the last day” to see the resurrection; He was standing directly in front of her! This self-identification is the fifth of Jesus’ seven “I am” sayings in John. The second part of Jesus’ self-identification, *and the life*, should not be overlooked or subsumed under the resurrection. Jesus proclaimed He could animate a dead person, resurrection, and then provide them with life, in the sense of an ongoing meaningful existence.

Jesus’ self-affirmation came with a promise: *The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live*. The verb *believe*, *pisteuō* in Greek, is in the form of a present active participle, stressing the ongoing or enduring nature of the action. True faith is characterized by a consistent, everyday believing in Jesus. The heart of the promise is that not even something as traumatic and seemingly final as death can prevent Jesus from giving life to those who really believe in Him.

Verse 26: Jesus then expanded Martha’s theology further. The resurrection is not just something you think about when someone has died. The resurrection gives confidence and certainty to those who are still living. Thus Jesus addressed *Everyone who lives and believes*. The forms of the Greek verbs, *lives* and *believes*, indicate Jesus had in mind those who are “living and believing” in Him in the present. To everyone who lives and believes, Jesus promised they will never die — ever. The Greek is emphatic. Jesus then challenged Martha by asking, *Do you believe this?*

Verse 27: Martha affirmed her faith in Jesus, addressing Him as Lord. However, her profession of faith was still marked by the old limitation. The verb *believe* is in the perfect tense; basically she said, “I have believed all along.” Then she revealed the content of her

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faith. First, Jesus is the Messiah. Second, He is the Son of God, who comes into the world. These are great affirmations, but not a word about resurrection in the present.

2. THE SAVIOR'S CONCERN (JOHN 11:33-37)

Verse 33: The statement *Jesus saw her crying* is more than a casual observation about Jesus. When Jesus saw people He saw their need, felt their pain, and shared their burden. Jesus saw also the Jews who had come with her. The double occurrence of the verb *crying* sets the mood for this episode. Lazarus' death caused a deep-seated grief surpassed only by our Savior's personal concern for "His sheep."

Verse 34: Martha, Mary, and the other Jews needed a dramatic reminder of Jesus' dynamic presence in their midst. Jesus chose to do the impossible. He asked for the location of Lazarus' grave. The people said come and see. The only other time the exact phrase *come and see* occurs in John was when Philip responded to Nathanael's question, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (1:46).

Verse 35: This statement, the shortest of all biblical verses, is a graphic reminder of our Savior's personal concern for people. John used a different Greek verb for *weeping*, than was used in 11:33 of Mary's "crying." Jesus wept, not because Lazarus was dead, but because He still was surrounded by "the same unbelief and theological ignorance that prompted His anger."

Verse 36: The Jews in attendance misread Jesus' tears. They thought He, like themselves, was grieving for a friend He would never see or talk to again. The statement, *See how He loved him*, indicates "Jesus wept" in a deep and observable way.

Verse 37: The real source of Jesus' tears was captured in the question of some in the crowd, *Couldn't He who opened the blind man's eyes also have kept this man from dying?* Their query confirms Jesus' healing ministry was well known, especially giving sight to the man blind from birth (John 9). Also, their query reveals their limited understanding of who Jesus was and why He performed the sign-miracles. Certainly, Jesus could have kept this man from dying! Jesus' personal concern, however, was not to convince people of His power, but rather to convince them of their need to enter His life. "Jesus wept" because they were missing the meaning of His ministry.

3. THE SAVIOR'S POWER (JOHN 11:38-44)

Verse 38: Jesus was angry in Himself right up to the time He came to the tomb. *The tomb* is described as a cave sealed by a stone lying against it. The purpose of tombs in the first century was to store the corpse during the decay process. Once the corpse was reduced to bones, the bones would be collected and stored in a stone box known as an ossuary. Usually, only the wealthier members of society could afford a tomb, but caves were utilized for the purpose.

Verse 39: Jesus took command of the situation, ordering the Jews to remove the stone. The stone represent the only barrier between the dead man Lazarus and the Lord of Life. Martha revealed once again the limits of her theology and her anxiety over what Jesus commanded. She felt compelled to inform Jesus Lazarus was decaying because he had been dead four days. Martha had not grasped at all that Jesus was the very present "resurrection and life."

Verse 40: Jesus again redirected Martha toward the need to believe in Him. The question, *Didn't I tell you*, reminded John's readers that faith begins with a word from God. The conditional statement, *if you believed*, utilizes the verb *pisteuō*, reminding the readers of their part in building relationship with God. God speaks; people must believe. The promise for believing in what Jesus has said is the believer would see the glory of God. Jesus earlier had told His disciples Lazarus' sickness would not end in death, but rather it was "for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (11:4).

Verse 41: The Jews obeyed Jesus and removed the stone. Jesus took time to thank His Father for hearing Him. Our Lord demonstrated once again His focus on the Father even in the midst of the tense drama at the tomb. Surrounded by short-sighted people who were overwhelmed by grief, Jesus focused on the reason the Father had sent Him. He

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came “that they may have life and have it in abundance” (10:10).

Verse 42: Jesus thanked God for hearing Him, not because He ever doubted it, but because of the crowd standing around Him at Lazarus’ tomb. Jesus’ purpose in praying was to thank God because once again the crowd would have opportunity to believe the Father had sent Him.

Verse 43: After His brief prayer, Jesus gave His second command at the tomb. He shouted with a loud voice, calling Lazarus by name. His command was brief; come out! By using his name, Lazarus, Jesus displayed His personal concern and love for His friend; by commanding him to come out, He displayed His power over death and the grave.

Verse 44: What was the result of Jesus’ display of personal concern and loving power? The dead man came out! During His ministry Jesus raised three people from the dead: a little girl (Mark 5:35-42), an only son (Luke 7:11-15), and a beloved friend (John 11:3,44). Like the previous six miracle-signs John selected, this reanimation of Lazarus was designed to reveal who Jesus is. Our Lord’s self-identification to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life,” was here put into action as the dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Inside those death clothes was a living human being.

Jesus uttered His third and final command at the tomb that day, *Loose him and let him go*. A living person has no need to wear the clothes of death. That’s why Jesus was “angry in His spirit” and “deeply moved;” that’s why Jesus wept. He was surrounded by people who believed “in the resurrection at the last day” (11:24) but seemed to be wrapped in the death clothes of grief in the present day. In His command to the Jews to loose him and let him go, Jesus was seeking to free not only Lazarus from his literal grave clothes, but also the crowd from the limitations of their short-sighted theology. Resurrection was not limited to the last day. He Himself was “the resurrection” and “the life” that followed. He Himself was with them. He promised eternal and abundant life. He demonstrated genuine personal concern. He displayed loving power. Lazarus was freed from his grave clothes; Jesus sought the same for the rest of the crowd.