

A person with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a grey sweater, is seen from behind, looking towards a bright, abstract background of colorful brushstrokes in shades of orange, red, green, and blue. The overall mood is contemplative and artistic.

BEHOLD

DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!” Those were the words John the Baptist spoke upon seeing Jesus. Why did John, the disciple of Jesus, write his Gospel? He wrote it that we may believe (John 20:31). What did he want us to believe? A better question would be: Who did he want us to believe in? The answer is Jesus.

The purpose and aim of believing is to know “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31). Jesus came to bring sinners back to God. How could he do that? John tells us: Jesus is the only way to God, because he is God. He is God in the flesh, and God gave himself for us (3:16).

Throughout this series, we will see John build on the foundation he set up in his introduction (1:1-18). The beginning chapters of John function as a heralding cry for a coming king. It’s as if John the disciple is echoing the message of John the Baptist; he carefully crafts the book to say, “Make way for the King. Behold your God.”

In Numbers 24:17, it was prophesied, “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.” John is clearly saying that this prophesied King has come, and his name is Jesus. It’s as if John is saying, “Behold, the King who will crush our enemy is here.” John desires that all people would read his account and honor the King with their lives through faith. As John continues his Gospel, we will behold Jesus as the eternal Lord who came to express his love, give us life, and grant us liberty.

This study guide is made up of three weekly sections:

1. DISCUSSIONS

Each week has groupings of questions that fit well together. These groupings are called “discussions.” They are designed to help you get into God’s Word, apply the sermon, and guide your group discussion. Use the discussions or questions that fit best with your group’s situation or needs. Beyond your Small Group, these questions can also be used in the context of a Bible study or discipleship relationship.

2. FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

These questions were created specifically with families in mind, and we hope they’ll be useful in facilitating family discussion (maybe around the dinner table or at a different family devotional time). These questions are applicable for all ages, including young children. We pray these bless you as you disciple your family.

3. APPLICATION

Each week, we’ve suggested some applications. Whether you use these applications or find other ways to respond, our hope is that you intentionally act on and obey God’s Word.

DISCUSSION 1

In vv. 19-23, the Pharisees ask John the Baptist who he claims to be. John tells us clearly who he is in relation to the Scripture.

1. Read Isaiah 40:3-5. John the Baptist claims to be the voice Isaiah speaks of. Why do you think he uses this text to explain who he is? Consider John 5:44-46. What can this passage reveal to us about John the Baptist's answer?
2. There seem to be hints of justice and fairness in the passage from Isaiah. What do these verses tell us about what Jesus's ministry accomplishes?
3. How does John's use of Scripture inform the way we should read it, apply it, and proclaim it?

DISCUSSION 2

In John 1:24-28, we see that John the Baptist made some startling claims. Here, he is distancing himself from being the Messiah and alluding to Jesus. Baptism was not a common practice among Jews—especially in this manner. While this form occurred with Gentiles, the Pharisees wondered what authority John had to baptize Jews.

1. According to this passage, by what authority does John baptize?
2. John says, "Among you stands one you do not know." Since the Pharisees were likely familiar with Jesus of Nazareth, why does John say this? What does he mean?
3. Based on the above question, what does this teach us about the nature of salvation (See John 3:6-8; 6:44)?

DISCUSSION 3

In the concluding verses of this passage, John the Baptist uses texts and prophecies from the Old Testament to declare Jesus as the Son of God, the true Messiah.

1. Consider 1:29 and 8:58. What is John proclaiming about Jesus?
2. Read Isaiah 11:1-2 and Ezekiel 36:27. How do these verses relate to John 1:32-34? How does this emphasize who Jesus is? What does this mean for us?

3. How might this text embolden you as you think of sharing the good news with others? How might it change the way you interact with co-workers, friends, or family members?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. Who does John the Baptist claim to be? According to Isaiah 40:3, who does Scripture say John is?
2. If Isaiah wrote of John hundreds of years before John even existed, what does that tell us about the Bible?
3. Who does John claim Jesus is? Why do we need a Messiah?
4. What does John say happens to believers? How does this empower you to follow God?

APPLICATION

1. Read John 1 and Isaiah 40. Meditate on these passages and thank God for his kindness.
2. John proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” What is the name of someone in your life who needs to hear this good news? Share this name with a close friend or family member, or your Small Group. Pray together that God would provide a gospel opportunity.



WEEK TWO

UNLIKELY MEN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

John 1:35-51

DISCUSSION 1

We view discipleship as a multiplication endeavor, and a way that we follow Jesus together. Our aim is to ignite a passion to follow Jesus by following Jesus and helping others do the same. In other words: God calls believers to make disciples who will also make disciples.

1. Read John 1:35-51. Identify the people who believed in Jesus after hearing another person's testimony of Jesus.
2. Have you ever shared the gospel with someone and seen them come to faith? If so, share this experience.
3. Have you been discipled by another believer? Have you discipled anyone? If so, share about the impact of those relationships.

DISCUSSION 2

Many Old Testament texts refer to a messiah or a savior. These references help us understand the unity of the Bible and deepen our understanding of Jesus.

1. In John 1:45, we learn that the Old Testament contains multiple prophecies about Jesus. Because of this, Jesus is a fulfillment of the Old Testament Scripture. Why is this important?
2. In the following verse, Nathaniel asked, "Can anything good can come from Nazareth?" Why is it significant that Jesus came from a place that wasn't highly esteemed? How should this affect the way we view people who come from places that don't have a good reputation?
3. In this section, Jesus is called the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Rabbi, the Son of God, the King of Israel, and the Son of Man. Reflect on these titles and their significance.

DISCUSSION 3

In Genesis 28, a ladder connects heaven to earth. This reflects the separation between man and God. Because of sin, our relationship with God was broken and we needed a way to God.

1. Read verse 5. What promise is given in this verse? How might the truth of this promise impact your life?

2. Light always overcomes the darkness, but what does John mean by “light” and “darkness”? Give some practical examples in your life or in the lives of others?
3. How might darkness win in the battle of darkness and light? How can we prevent it?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. Spend some time with your family discussing what discipleship means. Why is it important that we share Jesus with others?
2. Read and discuss v. 45. Why is it important for us to know that Jesus was prophesied in the Old Testament?
3. Read Genesis 28:10-17. Then read v. 51 from this week’s passage. Through Jesus we have access to God in a very personal way. We don’t need to go to a temple or have someone pray to God for us. As a family, discuss how prayer connects us with God. Also discuss why and how we should pray.

APPLICATION

1. Are you discipling someone right now? Are you being disciplined by anyone? How might God be calling you to step into either of those roles? Pray about this and take steps this month to follow the Lord’s leading in developing these relationships.
2. Consider buying and reading the book “Gospel-Centered Discipleship” by Jonathan K. Dodson.



WEEK THREE WATER TO WINE

John 2:1-12

DISCUSSION 1

Miracles are often set in the midst of a problem. In this passage, Jesus and his family are at a wedding when the wine runs out.

1. Consider the conversation between Jesus and his mother. What is your first impression? Do you think this conversation was good? If so, why?
2. What does this story tell us about Mary's faith? What would have happened if Mary didn't go to Jesus? How can that encourage us to live?

DISCUSSION 2

When Jesus decides to do this miracle, wonderful things happen.

1. How would you describe the servants' response to Jesus's command? What does it teach us?
2. How did the master of the feast respond to the miracle? What would you think if you had been there?
3. Consider the fact that the servants knew of the miracle, but the master did not. Isn't it interesting that God can be working miracles we don't even see? What are some miracles you may not clearly see that you can thank God for today?

DISCUSSION 3

This miracle did not bring healing, but it brought joy and resolution to a problem. It also served to foreshadow a future wedding. John chooses to record this as Jesus's first miracle as a reminder that hard days were approaching, but that the wedding day is coming for those who love the Lord.

1. How did the disciples respond to the miracle?
2. What other passages in the Bible mention weddings? How might these verses point to the redemptive work of Jesus?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. What does this week's passage reveal about Mary's faith?
2. How can Mary's faith encourage us to approach God with our requests?
3. What are some miraculous things God does for us that often go unnoticed?
4. **Activity:** If your children are old enough, consider acting out the story from John 2:1-12. If you do not have enough people, have one person be the narrator and fill in the blanks with the actors you do have. Afterwards, discuss the importance of this story and how you can apply its truths—individually and as a family.

APPLICATION

1. Read Revelation 19 and consider what the final marriage will be like. Thank God for his miraculous power that can work in our lives and make us more like him.
2. Start a journal to record the ways God is miraculously working in your life on a daily or weekly basis. Consider sharing some of your reflections with others.

DISCUSSION 1

This passage further reveals Jesus's passion for righteousness and truth. This zeal teaches us many things about the holiness of God.

1. Why do you think Jesus acted so strongly in this case?
2. How is God's holiness seen in this passage?
3. How does this passage address the importance of purity in the temple and in our lives?

DISCUSSION 2

The question the Jews ask Jesus in verse 18 gives us insight into the condition of their hearts.

1. What does the Jewish leaders' question reveal about their hearts (See Matt. 12:39)?
2. Where do you think their devotion was?
3. Read vv. 23-25 again. What did John mean when he said Jesus knew what was "in man"?
4. What does true desire for God look like? How might we embrace that desire in our lives?

DISCUSSION 3

Jesus's answer further reveals the heart condition of the Jewish leaders and provides greater understanding about the mysteries of God and his wise plan.

1. According to John, what does Jesus mean when he says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (v. 19)? Read 1 Corinthians 6:19. How do these two verses relate?
2. Romans 12:1 says our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. In light of this week's passage, what does this truth mean for our lives?
3. How do we sometimes worship God for what he gives instead of who he is? How can we live in a way that puts the giver above the gifts?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. Why did Jesus drive out those who were selling goods and exchanging money in the temple?
2. Why did the Jews question his actions? What does this say about their hearts?
3. What did Jesus mean when he said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”? Why is that good news for us?
4. How can we make sure that we put God—not the gifts he brings—first in our lives?

APPLICATION

1. Write down some characteristics of a healthy friendship. After you do that, create a list of some things that define your relationship with God. Compare the lists and pray about what might be missing in your relationship with God. Ask God to show you why this aspect is missing. Then, pray for wisdom to grow in those areas with his help.
2. Spend time doing something you enjoy. While doing so, be mindful of the God who gave you the ability to enjoy that activity. Take time to praise him for that.

DISCUSSION 1

Jesus steps on the scene proclaiming the expected arrival of the kingdom of God. This kingdom came with power, yet not in the way that Israel expected.

1. Nicodemus came to Jesus because he was curious about the things of God. Have you ever had someone inquire about your relationship with God? How did you respond to them?
2. Verse two of our passage tells us that Jesus did miracles to verify that he came from God. Do you believe that someone needs to see miracles in order to believe in Christ? Why or why not?
3. Jesus teaches many things regarding the kingdom of God. How would you define and describe the kingdom of God?

DISCUSSION 2

Anyone who will enter the kingdom of God must experience a new birth—the birth that Jesus speaks of in this passage.

1. In verse three, Jesus tells Nicodemus that unless someone is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God. Why is it necessary for someone to be born again (See 1 Cor. 2:14)?
2. Read Ezekiel 36:25-27. What are a few signs that someone has been born again?
3. Read John 3:8. How do you understand this verse in regard to someone being born again? Would you say you have a healthy understanding of the Holy Spirit?

DISCUSSION 3

Jesus is the incarnation of the eternal God, who came to earth from heaven.

1. Jesus rebukes the Pharisee Nicodemus in verse nine for not knowing that one must be born again, since he should have known the Old Testament. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your knowledge of the Old Testament? What could you do to improve that number?
2. Read Numbers 21:4-9. Why does John connect this story to Jesus as the Savior who would be “lifted up”?

3. How would you define eternity? What does John mean when he says that those who believe in Jesus will have “eternal life”? Will everyone have this? How do you know?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. What earthly kingdoms can you think of? How might those kingdoms be different than the kingdom of God? How should we live in God’s kingdom?
2. Read Ezekiel 36:25-27. What does it mean to be “born again”?
3. Reread John 3:8. What does this verse say about the Holy Spirit? Spend some time talking about the nature of the Holy Spirit and his role in the lives of Christians.

APPLICATION

1. The Holy Spirit is often the person of the Trinity who gets overlooked and forgotten. He is God and worthy of our praise. Consider doing a personal study on the Holy Spirit and how he works in our lives. A great book to read is “Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit” by Francis Chan.
2. Every morning for the next week, pray that God would give you opportunities to share his kingdom and his good news with others. Ask that his Spirit would empower you in mighty ways this week.

DISCUSSION 1

The love of God is vast beyond all measure. Our earthly relationships are only a flawed picture of the love we receive from God.

1. When you think about your life, who are some people who have loved you well? What made you appreciate their love?
2. In what ways is God's love better than our human love? How should the title "Father God" affect the way we think about God's love?
3. What are some barriers to people understanding the love of God? Do you ever struggle to believe that God loves you? If so, why? What can you do to overcome that struggle?

DISCUSSION 2

The greatest display of God's love for the world is that God sent his only Son to save sinners.

1. John 3:16 tells us that the way God loved the world was by giving us his only Son. Why was this the greatest gift we could receive?
2. Scripture says only those who believe will receive eternal life. Why is faith necessary for salvation?
3. We naturally think about God as being unemotional. Consider the fact that in order for God to redeem us, he had to send his only son to suffer on a cross for our sins. How should this help us in our fight against sin?

DISCUSSION 3

The rejection of God's Son is the greatest tragedy of all humanity.

1. Reread v. 18. Why is the person who doesn't believe in Jesus already condemned?
2. Why do many people struggle with the doctrine of eternal judgement for non-believers? How would you answer someone who struggled with it?
3. Reread vv. 19-20. What is the ultimate reason someone won't believe in Jesus? Why should this encourage you to always be on mission for the gospel?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the love of God. Why was it loving for God to give us his only son? What does it mean that everyone who believes in Jesus will receive eternal life?
2. Define the title “Heavenly Father.” Why is God’s love as our father better than any love we will experience from our earthly family?
3. Reread vv. 19-20. According to this passage, why do some people not love Jesus? Why is it important that we share the light of Christ with others?

APPLICATION

1. Commit to praying for three people in your life who don’t know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Pray for them every day this week, that their hearts may be softened and that the Lord would open a door for you to share the gospel with them.
2. Give a special gift to one person in your life this week. You may choose to write a note along with the gift to encourage them. Look for a way to tie this gift back to the infinite gift you have received from God.



WEEK SEVEN WHOEVER BELIEVES HAS ETERNAL LIFE

John 3:22-36

DISCUSSION 1

John's followers seemed to be fearful of Jesus's ministry.

1. Read vv. 25-26. According to these verses, why were they fearful of Jesus's ministry?
2. How can we be fearful of others' ministry, or even their success?
3. What can we do to battle against this fear?

DISCUSSION 2

John's response is not only humble, but also exalts the importance of Christ.

1. What wisdom and guidance does John offer to his disciples that results in humility?
2. How can that wisdom protect us from sin? What sins does it protect us from?
3. Notice that John's joy is made complete not by succeeding in his own ministry, but by witnessing the ministry of Jesus. In your group, think of times this is true in your personal relationships and spiritual life.

DISCUSSION 3

Quotation marks were not a part of the original Scripture, so there is disagreement on whether vv. 31-36 came from John the Baptist or John the Apostle. Regardless, the speaker reveals the Son's identity, purpose, and mission.

1. Read vv. 31-34. What do we see about Jesus's identity in these verses? How is this encouraging to you?
2. Read Isaiah 61:1 and Ezekiel 36:26-27. In verse 34 of this week's passage, John says that Jesus gives the Spirit without measure. What does this mean in relation to these texts? What are some characteristics of the kingdom of God?
3. How can we live in a way that aligns with Jesus's mission, his kingdom, and the power of his Spirit?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. Why were John the Baptist's followers afraid of Jesus becoming popular? How does John respond?
2. Read vv. 27, 30. How does the truth and wisdom in these verses help us in our walk with God and others?
3. Who does John say Jesus is?
4. Why does Jesus come to give us his Spirit? What must we do to receive it?

APPLICATION

1. John says, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Talk with a friend, family member, or your Small Group about various ways each of you can make John's statement practical in your lives. Hold each other accountable.
2. Either by yourself or with others, pray about ways you can be part of God's mission in Isaiah 61:1. Share one way you will take steps to proclaim the good news in the next few months. Ask someone you trust to hold you accountable. If they desire to grow in this area as well, strive to hold them accountable.



WEEK EIGHT SAMARITAN WOMAN

John 4:1-43

DISCUSSION 1

A good story begins with a good setting. This story has many details that are discussed in the first six verses.

1. Who are the people mentioned in these verses?
2. What are the places mentioned in the verses?
3. Describe the actions of Jesus in this introduction.
4. How is that encouraging to us in our daily lives?

DISCUSSION 2

The two central characters in this story are now brought together. Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman.

1. In vv. 7-15, Jesus and the woman enter a discussion. What does Jesus claim about himself, and what is the woman's response? Do you know of people today who would respond like her?
2. The discussion about worship is very informative (vv. 20-25). What does Jesus say about worship? How can that impact the role that worship has in your life?
3. In vv. 25-26, Jesus reveals his identity to the woman. Think about the title, "I AM." What does it mean for your life?

DISCUSSION 3

The story ends with the disciples returning to Jesus and the woman returning to her people. As a result of their discussion, many became believers.

1. What can we learn about evangelism from the Samaritan woman witnessing to her people?
2. The chapter ends with a discussion between Jesus and his disciples. How can this discussion help us in our evangelism?
3. Why is it good news that Jesus shared himself with someone who was considered an outsider? How might that change the way we live out our faith?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. **Activity:** Give everyone a glass of water and let each person share what they think about water. Then, have everyone drink the water. Afterwards, discuss: how Jesus is like water? How is he better than water?
2. When Jesus traveled to Samaria, he was choosing to visit a place that was culturally looked down upon. The very thought of a Jew visiting Samaria was unheard of. Why do you think he did that? How can we live by Jesus's example?
3. What does it mean to worship in spirit and truth?
4. What does it mean that Jesus is the living water? How does the satisfaction he gives help us stay obedient to him?

APPLICATION

1. Read Isaiah 55:1 and Revelation 21:6. Talk about the connection between these passages and meditate on how these truths can motivate you to live in obedience.
2. Pray for God to help you find your identity in him and share the gospel with others.

