STUDY BIBLE WORKBOOK

The Gospel of John

That You May Believe

BOOK INTRODUCTION

The eternal Word became flesh. Through signs, witnesses, teaching, the cross, and the resurrection, John invites us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and to have life in His name.

Scripture quotations: World English Bible (WEB)

STUDY AT YOUR OWN PACE

Begin with this book introduction before John 1. Read each section with your own Bible open. This introduction provides context and a preview of all 21 chapters; normal Quick Study and SOAP Deep Dive exercises begin with John 1.

WESTERN GRACE MEDIA

The Central Theme

John announces that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who entered human history, revealed the Father, gave His life, rose again, and offers eternal life to everyone who believes in Him. The Gospel calls readers to respond personally to who Jesus is, rather than merely admire what He did.

The Key Verse

John 20:30–31, WEB
“Therefore Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.”

The Big-Picture Overview

John tells the story of Jesus through selected signs, conversations, public teachings, personal encounters, and the events surrounding His death and resurrection. He begins before creation itself: “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1). He then declares that the Word became flesh (1:14). Jesus is not presented merely as a teacher carrying a message from God; He is the Son who reveals the Father and makes God known.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke share many overlapping accounts and are commonly called the Synoptic Gospels. John includes some events found in the others, but gives sustained attention to different conversations, signs, festivals, and Jesus’ statements about His identity. These differences in selection and emphasis need not be treated as competing purposes.

Author: What We Know and What Is Traditionally Believed

The Gospel itself: The book does not place the author’s personal name in its opening. It connects its testimony to “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20–24). John 21:24 identifies this disciple as a witness associated with the written testimony, while the precise editorial relationship of the closing verses is discussed by interpreters.

Early Christian tradition: The Gospel was traditionally attributed to John the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus’ twelve apostles. Early church witnesses, including Irenaeus, connected John with the Gospel and with Ephesus.

Scholarly discussion: Scholars disagree over whether the apostle personally composed every part in its present form or whether his eyewitness testimony was preserved and shaped in a Johannine community. The book’s own emphasis is that its testimony concerns Jesus and is offered so readers may believe.

When and Where Was It Written?

A frequently proposed date is approximately AD 85–95, though earlier and later dates within the first-century discussion have been argued. The Gospel does not supply a publication date. Its detailed awareness of Jewish settings and its mature reflection on Jesus are interpreted differently by scholars; neither establishes an exact year.

Ephesus in Roman Asia (in modern-day western Türkiye) is the traditional place associated with John's later ministry and with the Gospel's origin. John itself does not explicitly state its place of composition. The traditional location is a reasonable historical proposal, not a fact stated by the text.

Original Audience and Purpose

The original readers likely included communities familiar with both Jewish Scripture and the wider Greek-speaking Roman world. John explains some Jewish terms and customs (for example, John 1:38, 1:41; 4:9), while expecting readers to wrestle seriously with Israel's hopes and Scriptures. The precise first audience is not named.

John's stated purpose is explicit: the recorded signs and testimony are meant to lead readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and to receive life in His name (20:30–31). Christians disagree about whether "believe" here primarily invites initial faith or also strengthens existing believers; the Gospel serves both proclamation and deepened trust.

The Historical World of John

Roman rule: Judea and Galilee lay within a complex political world shaped by Roman imperial authority and regional rulers. In the passion narrative Pontius Pilate acts as Roman governor in Judea.

Jewish worship and Scripture: The temple at Jerusalem, the synagogue, the Law of Moses, and Israel's festivals form the religious context for much of Jesus' ministry. Passover (John 2; 6; 11–19), Tabernacles (John 7–8), and Dedication (John 10) provide important settings for understanding His words.

Different Jewish groups: Priests, Pharisees, and other leaders appear in the Gospel, but they are not interchangeable labels for all Jewish people. Jesus, His first disciples, and many believers in John were themselves Jewish. References to "the Jews" must be read in their literary and historical contexts, never used to blame Jewish people collectively for Jesus' death.

Everyday life: Wells, vineyards, fishing boats, shepherding, feasts, household hospitality, and burial customs provide vivid settings for John's teaching.

Geography of the Gospel

Galilee: A northern region that includes Cana and the area around the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus performed signs and taught.

Samaria: A region between Galilee and Judea. John 4 describes Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman near Sychar and Jacob's well; their conversation exposes significant historical divisions.

Judea and Jerusalem: The southern region and its central city, where temple festivals, controversy, Jesus' trial, crucifixion, and resurrection form major parts of the account.

Bethany and the Jordan area: Several episodes involve Bethany near Jerusalem and places east of the Jordan. "Bethany beyond the Jordan" in John 1:28 has an uncertain exact archaeological location, so it should not be pinned confidently on a map.

The Gospel records movement among these settings but does not identify every road traveled. A finished topographical map should distinguish known centers from uncertain sites rather than invent a precise travel itinerary.

Geographic Setting of the Gospel of John

Biblical regions, first-century political territories, topographic relief, and a modern locator for wider context.



REGIONAL LOCATION

The red box shows the area of the main map.



COUNTRIES IN YEAR 2020

Red box indicates the main map area.

How to read the atlas

Pastel shading identifies approximate first-century political regions. Terrain shading suggests mountains and valleys, and blue identifies seas, lakes, and rivers.

Interpretive caution

The modern inset provides present-day geographic orientation, not ancient political borders. Some ancient sites and boundaries remain uncertain.

Main historical map: original WGM illustration. Modern locator: current-country regional reference with highlighted extent.

How John Is Organized

John 1:1–18 — Prologue: The eternal Word, creation, light, incarnation, and revelation of the Father.
John 1:19–12:50 — Public ministry: Witnesses, disciples, signs, conversations, growing division, and the approach of Jesus' hour.
John 13:1–17:26 — Jesus with His disciples: Love, service, the Holy Spirit, abiding, suffering, and Jesus' prayer.
John 18:1–20:31 — Death and resurrection: Arrest, trial, crucifixion, empty tomb, resurrection appearances, and the Gospel's stated purpose.
John 21 — Epilogue: The risen Jesus, a miraculous catch, Peter's restoration, and the continuing call to follow Him.

These divisions are study aids, not inspired headings. The precise boundaries of literary sections can be described in more than one faithful way.

Jesus and the Gospel

John presents Jesus as the eternal Word who was with God and was God (1:1), and who became flesh (1:14). He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29), the Son sent by the Father (3:16–17), the giver of living water and bread of life, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life, and the resurrection and the life.

The cross is not a tragic interruption in Jesus' mission. John repeatedly points toward His "hour," when He willingly gives His life and accomplishes the Father's purpose. His resurrection confirms the truth of His claims and leads to the invitation of John 20:31. John speaks both of salvation as a present possession for the believer and of a future resurrection hope (5:24–29; 6:39–40).

How We Will Study John

Our Protestant Evangelical approach: Scripture is the final authority. The workbook follows the historic Christian understanding of Jesus' deity, His atoning death, bodily resurrection, and salvation by grace through faith. We will not reshape the text to fit contemporary political or cultural ideologies; legitimate interpretive questions will be handled with humility.

Read the passage first. The Scripture is the authority; the explanation is there to assist, not replace, your own reading.
Ask what John actually says. Notice the speaker, audience, setting, repeated language, and the purpose of each sign.
Use context responsibly. Historical background, biblical cross-references, and Greek vocabulary can illuminate the text without becoming more important than it.
Recognize uncertainty. Where the text is not explicit or faithful Christians disagree, the workbook will say so.
Respond in faith. The goal is not simply information about Jesus but knowing, trusting, loving, and following Him.

Chapter-by-Chapter Preview

PART ONE — JESUS REVEALED

JOHN 1	The Word Became Flesh The eternal Word, witness of John the Baptist, and first disciples.
JOHN 2	The First Sign and the Father's House Water becomes wine; Jesus confronts misuse of the temple.
JOHN 3	You Must Be Born Again Nicodemus, new birth, God's love, and the Baptist's witness.
JOHN 4	Living Water for a Thirsty Soul A Samaritan woman, true worship, and healing at a distance.

PART TWO — SIGNS AND OPPOSITION

JOHN 5	The Authority of the Son Sabbath healing, the Father's work, life, and judgment.
JOHN 6	The Bread of Life Feeding the crowd, walking on water, and receiving Jesus by faith.
JOHN 7	Rivers of Living Water Jesus at Tabernacles; controversy, witness, and thirst.
JOHN 8	The Light of the World Truth, freedom, Jesus' identity, and the Abraham debate.
JOHN 9	Once I Was Blind, Now I See Physical sight and spiritual blindness in a healing and its aftermath.
JOHN 10	The Good Shepherd The Shepherd, His sheep, and His unity with the Father.

PART THREE — THE APPROACHING HOUR

JOHN 11	I Am the Resurrection and the Life Lazarus raised and opposition to Jesus sharpened.
JOHN 12	The King Comes to Jerusalem Anointing, triumphal entry, and Jesus' coming death.

PART FOUR — PREPARING THE DISCIPLES

JOHN 13	Love One Another Foot washing, betrayal, and the new commandment.

JOHN 14	The Way, the Truth, and the Life Trust, the Father’s house, and the promised Helper.
JOHN 15	Abide in Me The true vine, fruitful life, love, and opposition.
JOHN 16	Take Heart—I Have Overcome The Spirit, sorrow turned to joy, and Jesus’ victory.
JOHN 17	That They May Be One Jesus prays for Himself, His disciples, and later believers.

PART FIVE — CROSS AND RESURRECTION

JOHN 18	The King on Trial Arrest, denial, and Jesus before Pilate.
JOHN 19	It Is Finished The crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus.
JOHN 20	He Is Risen The empty tomb, appearances, Thomas, and John’s purpose.
JOHN 21	Follow Me A catch of fish, Peter’s restoration, and discipleship.

Major Themes to Watch For

Jesus is the Son of God

John wants readers to know who Jesus is, including His unique relationship with the Father (1:18; 20:31).

Belief and eternal life

Belief in Jesus and life in His name recur across signs, teaching, and personal encounters (3:16; 5:24; 20:31).

Signs and witness

Miracles point beyond themselves to Jesus; witnesses call people to consider His identity (2:11; 5:31–40).

Light, darkness, and truth

The imagery describes revelation, moral response, and the darkness that resists Jesus (1:4–9; 3:19–21).

The “I am” sayings

Jesus uses memorable images and striking claims to explain His identity and life-giving work (6:35; 8:12; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1).

Glory, the cross, and resurrection

Jesus' glory is revealed in obedient self-giving, death, and victory over death (12:23–33; 19–20).

The Holy Spirit and discipleship

Jesus promises the Helper; love, abiding, and witness mark His followers (14–16).

A Note on Interpretation and Textual Questions

John contains passages that deserve careful study, including the account of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53–8:11), which is absent from many early manuscripts and bracketed or noted in many modern Bibles. When the workbook reaches passages of this kind, it will explain the evidence plainly and distinguish the biblical text from historical proposals. Christian disagreement about some interpretations will be acknowledged without losing sight of the Gospel's stated purpose.

Beginning John 1

Read John 1 slowly before beginning the chapter workbook. Notice what the text says about the Word, creation, light, life, testimony, the Lamb of God, and the first disciples. Ask how each description helps answer John's central question: Who is Jesus?

Sources and editorial note

Scripture references and quotations follow the public-domain World English Bible. Historical summaries distinguish the Gospel's internal claims from early Christian tradition and modern scholarly proposals. Key passages for authorship and purpose: John 1:1–18; 20:30–31; 21:20–24. The proposed historical date and Ephesus tradition are not stated by the Gospel itself. The geography page illustrates major regions and locations without inventing exact routes or uncertain site coordinates.