

**Join us for Bible Study
Wednesday Nights at 7:00PM
on Zoom**

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The Gospel of John: Part 1



Dr. Tony Evans

A RightNow Media Study

Description

Where do you turn when the world around you grows dark? In this study of the Gospel of John, Dr. Tony Evans encourages us to turn to Christ by reminding us of the two purposes for the beloved disciple's book—that we would believe in Jesus and find life in his name. Despite what our culture may argue, there is only one hope that is truly trustworthy and that is our savior, Jesus Christ.

Welcome, to this twelve-session series that will draw you back to the essential truths of our faith and the life found in our king.

Session 1: John 1:1–34

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

Jesus is the eternal Son of God, revealed to us so that we might believe in him and receive eternal life.

Head Change

To know Jesus's true identity: God of the universe incarnate with us.

Heart Change

To feel the love of God for you, that he would send his Son to bring us out of our sin and darkness.

Life Change

To live a life of worship, giving Jesus all we have.

OPEN

Who do you think Jesus is?

Today, everyone seems to have a unique perspective on who Jesus really was. People may say he was a good teacher, a charismatic leader, or just a nice man. They may even go so far as to say he was a prophet or a spiritually enlightened person. But in the Gospel of John, we will see that Jesus is much more than any of those answers.

He is the Son of God who came to us so that we might believe in him and have eternal life. To think he is anything less is to completely misunderstand who he is.

READ

John 1:1–34

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

How does this passage describe Jesus?

What is the importance of Jesus becoming a man (the Incarnation)?

What is the appropriate way to respond to Jesus Christ?

Show Session 1: John 1:1–34 (11 minutes).

DISCUSS

The opening chapters of a book set the stage for the rest of the story. The Gospel of John is no different. What stands out to you most in this passage? What did Dr. Evans say is the primary focus of this Gospel?

Note: For further study on the background and purpose of the Book of John, see Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

Read John 1:1–18.

At this point, John has not revealed who the Word is (interestingly, the name of Jesus doesn't appear until verse 17) but the passage does tell us a lot about him. What does this passage tell us about the Word? Who is he?

This passage not only describes the Word's identity but also his actions and purposes. He has a lot going on. What are the things the Word has done? What is he doing now?

Note: For further study on the Word, see Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

Have you ever seen darkness so thick, so deep, that it could not be penetrated by a flashlight? No, light always overcomes darkness. Examine verses 4–5. What does it mean that the Word, Jesus, is the “light of mankind”?

Now, you might be thinking, “If this person was in the world, we would all know about it.” Reread verses 10–13. The tragic irony is that Jesus, the Word, came into the world and was neither received nor recognized. We need “witnesses,” like John the Baptist, to point him out to us. Who introduced you to Jesus? In what ways did they “come as a witness to testify” to you? In what ways are you a witness for Jesus?

Note: For a peek at the Greek words for “believe” and “witness,” see Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study.

We will learn more about what it means to be born again in John 3, but we get a sneak peek of it here. When we believe in Jesus, we become sons and daughters of God. Look at verses 12–13. What is required of you to be considered a child of God? In what ways has this truth changed the way you live?

Verse 14 gives us a world-changing truth: The Word, the light of the world, is a knowable person. He is not an impersonal force or a hidden savior; he is the present God full of grace and truth.

When have you felt alone or like God was far away? What made you feel like he was distant?

Consider what this passage is teaching: God has not stayed far from you, but has sent his Son to you, in the same form as you, so that he might bring you grace and truth. What comfort does Christ's nearness give you?

Dr. Evans ended his teaching by reading from Philippians 2. Read Philippians 2:6–11. What does this passage teach you about Jesus? In what ways does it help you understand his mission on earth?

Note: For a deeper look at Jesus dwelling with us, see Go Deeper Section 4 at the end of this study.

Verses 14–17 repeatedly mention grace. What can we learn about grace in this passage? What is the source of God's grace?

Note: For a deeper look the Covenant of Grace, see Go Deeper Section 5 at the end of this study.

Dr. Evans noted that our appropriate response to Jesus is worship. Once you see who Jesus truly is, “you don't give him excuses, you give him all you've got because he's the only one in the universe worthy of all you have.” What areas of your life, if any, do you keep from Jesus? What keeps you from bringing those areas of your life to Jesus?

Read John 1:19–34.

This passage introduces us to an important character: John the Baptist. He is not the same John that wrote this book, but a herald of Jesus, someone prophesied to come hundreds of years before (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 4:5–6). John 1:7 says John the

Baptist came as a witness to testify about Jesus. What is John's testimony? What does he say about himself and about Jesus? John the Baptist is a great example for how we can serve as witnesses for Jesus. What do you say when you talk about Jesus? Is it easy or difficult for you to tell people about Jesus? Why do you think that is?

Look again at what John says about Jesus, especially in verses 29–34. What could it look like to emulate John and his message when you tell people about Jesus?

Since Jesus is the Word, the creator and sustainer of all things who has come to us, there is no greater calling than to tell the world about him. In verse 31, John the Baptist says he did not recognize Jesus at first but lived in such a way that Jesus might be revealed to his countrymen. What habits could you change in your life to reveal Jesus to the people around you? What new habits could you start? Which ones need to end?

LAST WORD

In the beginning God spoke, and light invaded the darkness. But instead of walking with God in the light, humanity fell into sin and darkness. Now, God has once again invaded the darkness with the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. He has come to us with grace and truth to redeem us from the darkness of our sin and to reconcile us to himself.

Our response to him can be no less than worship, giving him all we have and doing all we can to make him known in a world that has neither recognized nor received him.

As we continue through the Gospel of John, prayerfully examine Jesus. Learn more about him. Trust him more fully. When you

get to know Jesus, you get to know the God of the universe.
That is an exciting journey!

Session 2: John 1:35–51

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

In Jesus, we are saved to eternity with God. But God also has a plan for us today: to be his disciples and live as witnesses to him in our community.

Head Change

To know that Jesus has called us to follow him in every area of our lives.

Heart Change

To feel committed to following Jesus and telling others about him.

Life Change

To boldly follow Jesus and proclaim his glory to those around us.

OPEN

Who are your favorite celebrities? What draws you to them?

When Jesus calls us to follow him, he means us to do much more than appreciate him from a distance. In this session, Dr. Tony Evans shows us what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. It's an exciting future getting to know God and leading others to know him.

READ

John 1:35–51

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

When the people in this passage meet Jesus, how do they react to him?

What do people do after they meet Jesus?

How does Dr. Evans connect our future in heaven to our daily lives?

Show Session 2: John 1:35–51 (10 minutes).

DISCUSS

Read John 1:35–39.

We learned in the last session John the Baptist came as a witness to Jesus. Here, in verses 35–36, John fulfills his ministry. What title does John give to Jesus? According to Dr. Evans, what does this title mean?

Note: For further study and more information on the Lamb of God, see Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

John the Baptist's goal was to attach people to Jesus, not to himself. When two of his disciples (Andrew and, most likely, John the Apostle) leave him to follow Jesus, they aren't disrespecting John, they are doing exactly what he taught. We, like John, are called to lead people to Jesus, not to build our own fanbase. What are some practical ways that you can use your platform to build Jesus's following?

When Jesus notices the two disciples following him, he turns to ask them a very important question in verse 38: What do you want from me? These two could have wanted a myriad of things, but all they wanted was to follow Jesus. What do you want from Jesus? What is he offering you?

Read John 1:40–42

When we enjoy something, be it a great restaurant or good movie, we rush to tell our friends and family about it. More than that, we want them to experience the goodness we have found. We want them to see it, taste it, and experience with us. What

does Andrew do after meeting Jesus? How does Andrew share the goodness he found in Jesus?

Note: For further study and more information on the Messiah/Christ, see Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

Dr. Evans shared, “When you come to Jesus, you get more than an exciting offer from the Lamb, you get an exciting future of serving him.” Jesus knew Simon’s history and gave him purpose for his future. Jesus knows your history, and that won’t stop him from using you in big ways. In what specific ways have you felt limited by your past?

Dr. Evans said, “Many Christians want to go to heaven but want Jesus to leave them alone on earth.” It’s easy to follow Jesus to church on Sunday, but God wants you to make an impact for his kingdom every day. What are some ways you can follow Jesus every day?

Read John 1:43–51.

When Jesus meets Philip, he gives him a simple command: follow me. He gives no promises about what tomorrow will hold, no assurance about an easy path, no conditions. Following Jesus is not circumstantial; it’s a decision to walk with the Messiah through all of your circumstances. When is it difficult for you to follow Jesus? What can you do to trust Jesus more in those areas of your life?

How do the disciples introduce people to Jesus in verses 40–42, 45–46? In what ways can you emulate Andrew and Philip when you introduce people to Jesus?

We can't physically introduce people to Jesus, but can we canintroduce them to Jesus through the Bible, the way we live, and prayer. What have you learned about Jesus in John chapter 1? What are some ways you can use what you have learned to share Jesus with the people around you?

Note: For further study and more information on Jesus's omniscience, see Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study. Jesus promises to show Nathanael more of who he is simply because Nathanael believed in his words. Dr. Evans noted, "God will only show you more of himself when he sees you take him at his word." What are some ways that you can trust God more in every area of your life?

If you are following Jesus, what are some ways has God shown you more of himself this year?

Note: For further study and more information on Jacob's vision of heaven, see Go Deeper Section 4 at the end of this study.

Dr. Evans called out a common problem in today's church. Some Christians live like "spiritual secret agents," claiming to be Christians but not showing any evidence of faith in their life. In what situations are you hesitant to talk about Jesus? What can you do to live more boldly for him?

Four men meet Jesus in this passage and all four follow a similar pattern: 1) they are told about Jesus; 2) they meet Jesus for themselves; 3) they decide to follow Jesus; and 4) they run to tell other people about Jesus. Where are you in this process? If

you have chosen to follow Jesus, how can you continue to grow as a disciple and witness for Jesus?

LAST WORD

John 1 introduces us to Jesus and teaches us how to rightly respond to him. He is the Lamb of God, the Christ, the one of whom the prophets wrote, the Son of God, and the king of Israel. And he came so that you might follow him and be changed forever.

When you trust in Jesus, you are saved for eternity and redeemed to make an impact for him in history. Life is not a holding pattern for heaven. Rather, it is an opportunity to build the kingdom of God.

If you have met Jesus, it is now your turn to encourage others to “come and see” the Messiah.

Session 3: John 2:1–25

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

The works of Jesus reveal his character so that we might know him better and trust in his transformative work in our own lives.

Head Change

To know more about Jesus through his signs and actions.

Heart Change

To feel closer to Jesus and more encouraged to follow him.

Life Change

To trust Jesus more fully so that he can transform us.

OPEN

Who was your hero growing up? What did you do to be like them?

Jesus is a hero worth emulating. When we obey him and trust his guidance, we will find a life far greater and more purposeful than we ever imagined. In this chapter of John, Jesus shows us a glimpse of his glory and reveals his heart for worshipping the Father. As you learn about him, ask yourself, “How can I live more like Jesus?”

READ

John 2:1–25

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What is wine symbolic of in the Bible?

Why was Jesus angry with the moneychangers in the temple courts?

What does Dr. Evans say we should do if we want to see more of God in our lives?

Show Session 3: John 2:1–25 (10 minutes).

DISCUSS

Read John 2:1–11.

In ancient Palestine, hospitality was a sacred duty. Failure to provide for a guest would have been disgraceful. Failure to provide for your wedding guests would have been disastrous. No doubt, the bride and groom at this wedding would have been feeling ashamed for running out of wine and fear for what this would mean for their reputation. Think of a time when you were ashamed. What was your reaction? How did it make you feel? Look at the way Mary responded to Jesus. Even when it seemed that Jesus was not going to act, Mary still put her faith in him. She even told the servants around her to trust Jesus and follow all of his commands. What do you do when it seems like God is not listening to you or when it seems like he is not going to act?

What could it look like for you trust Jesus, like Mary did, even when your future seems unsure?

When Jesus transforms the water into wine, he gives the wedding an overabundance of excellent, quality wine. Dr. Evans noted it would have been between 120 and 150 gallons of water turned to the finest wine. What does this incredible gift tell you about Jesus?

Note: To learn more about the miracle of transformation go to Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

Jesus offers us far more than wine. Just as he covered the shame of the newlywed couple by creating wine, Jesus covers all of our sin and shame through his death on the cross. Now, we are not defined by our failures but by his work. In what ways have you seen Jesus work to cover your shame?

Note: To learn more about the connection between wine and joy go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

Read John 2:12–22.

The temple in Jerusalem was a holy place. Every inch of the building was built for the worship and glorification of God. Where was the marketplace of moneychangers and livestock salesman set up? In what ways does their location divert attention from God?

Note: To learn more about the marketplace in the temple go to Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study.

There are many ways we can divert our attention from God and use both church and worship for our own benefit. In what ways can we be tempted to focus on ourselves in the church today? Focusing on personal gain is not merely a danger for those on stage in church. We can all be tempted to use our good works to bolster our public image. What can you do to keep the focus and attention on Jesus in both your worship and actions?

When the disciples saw Jesus removing the animals, turning over tables, and scattering the coins of the moneychangers, they didn't rush to calm him down. What was the disciples' reaction to Jesus's actions?

When Jesus told the Jewish leaders that he would destroy and rebuild the temple, they responded with laughter and mockery. We, like the disciples, have the benefit of understanding his words in hindsight. What "temple" was Jesus talking about? What later miracle was Jesus referring to?

The disciples did not understand Jesus's words until after he was raised from the dead. They had to wait years to understand what Jesus was talking about. We may also have to wait to understand what God is doing in our lives today. What current circumstances in your life are difficult to understand? What can you do today to entrust these circumstances to Jesus?

Read John 2:23–25.

Many people came to believe in Jesus, but Jesus did not put his faith in them. According to Dr. Evans's teaching, why did Jesus refuse to give more of himself to these people?

Note: To learn more about the how people respond to Jesus go to Go Deeper Section 4 at the end of this study.

Jesus knew what was in the hearts of his followers. He also knows what is in our hearts—even the parts we'd rather not have him see. What about Jesus is the most difficult for you to trust? What would it look like for you to pray through that aspect of his character this week?

LAST WORD

Jesus knows what is in your heart. As you turn your life over to him, he will show more of himself to you, giving you more joy and purpose than you could ever imagine.

There will be times when you are uncertain of where he is leading you. You will have seasons of celebration, as Jesus had at the wedding in Cana. You will see injustice and, like Jesus in the temple, be called to fight sin in the world. Dr. Evans said it best: God wants to use you to make an impact on history.

Session 4: John 3:1–36

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

God shows his love to us through his Son Jesus who came so that we might have eternal life.

Head Change

To know that Jesus is the Son of God who offers us spiritual rebirth.

Heart Change

To feel the deep love of God for you when you look at Jesus.

Life Change

To put your faith in Jesus so that you might have eternal life.

OPEN

What makes you feel refreshed or “like a new person”?

Things as simple as a new haircut, a vacation, or a long night’s rest can make us feel brand new. We feel rejuvenated from our former way of living, even if only for a short time. When Jesus says that he wants to make us new, he truly means it. He doesn’t just want us to feel better for a little while—he wants us to have new lives and to live forgiven and free in the light.

READ

John 3:1–36

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What qualifies you to enter heaven?

What is the importance of the bronze serpent?

According to Dr. Evans, how is faith in Jesus different than all other world religions?

Show Session 4: John 3:1–36 (11 minutes).

DISCUSS

Read John 3:1–21.

We often think of the Pharisees as enemies of Jesus, but not all of the Pharisees opposed him. John 3 introduces us to Nicodemus, a Pharisee who wanted to learn from Jesus. What does this passage tell us about Nicodemus, specifically in verses 1–3, 10?

Note: To learn more about the Pharisees, go to Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

Nicodemus is an important figure in the spiritual and political life of Israel. But he does not lord his position over Jesus. Instead, he humbles himself before Jesus and seeks to learn from him. Often, we come to Jesus in prayer because we want him to do something for us, rather than seeking to listen and learn. What does it look like in your life to listen to and learn from Jesus?

Nicodemus starts the conversation by praising Jesus's miracles and signs, but Jesus redirects the conversation to being born again. When Nicodemus hears Jesus's words, what is his immediate reaction? What does he think it means to be born again?

Jesus then clarifies what he meant in verses 5–7. What does Jesus have in mind when he says, “born again”?

Note: To learn more about being born of water and the Spirit, go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

In the wilderness, God provided a way for his people to be healed from poisonous snake bites. This healing was not earned but was freely given to anyone who looked upon God's provision, the bronze serpent, raised up in front of them. What later event is Jesus predicting in verse 14? If you want to be healed of your sin, how must you respond to Jesus?

Note: To learn more about the bronze serpent, go to Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study.

Note: To learn more about the Son of Man lifted up, go to Go Deeper Section 4 at the end of this study.

What was Jesus's mission on earth according to verses 16–18?

This is the transfer of new birth. Jesus was raised up on the cross so that anyone who looks upon him would be forgiven of their sin, spiritually cleansed, and made new as the righteousness of God. In short, when you believe in Jesus you are born again. Imagine that someone asks you what it means to be born again. How would you explain it to them?

In verses 19–21, Jesus explains the different behaviors of those who trust in Jesus and those who reject him. What is the primary difference between the two? Which group do you fall into? Those who know Jesus don't have to hide their faults or live in shame. They have been fully forgiven by God and are able to live in a completely open and unrepachable way. Trusting Jesus causes you to live differently in every area of your life. If you have trusted Jesus, what can you do to live even more "in the light"?

Read John 3:25–26.

John the Baptist's disciples come to him with a complaint about Jesus. Why are they upset with Jesus?

Jealousy in ministry can create division and combativeness where God intends there to be cooperation and celebration. Have you ever been jealous over someone else's success? What caused you to be jealous of them? What did you do in reaction to your jealousy?

John the Baptist then takes time to remind his disciples of the supremacy of Christ. When divisions arise in ministry, we must likewise remind ourselves of the one we serve. We don't have to compete for Jesus's attention. We are simply called to serve in the ministry he gives us. When jealousy arises, what can you do to celebrate the kingdom of Christ first and foremost?

In verse 30, John the Baptist gives his disciples a truth we can all benefit from, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” What can you do to increase Jesus’s fame in your life, even when it means your personal reputation decreases?

Verses 31–36 sum up this whole chapter by clearly stating why Jesus came, what he came to do, the source of his authority, and his effect on us. Look at verse 36. What is the result of trusting Jesus? What is the result of rejecting Jesus?

Again, the Gospel of John forces us to decide if we will follow or turn away from Jesus. What have you chosen to do? If you have chosen to follow Jesus, what actions in your life can help you trust Jesus more each day?

LAST WORD

You cannot earn your way into heaven. You cannot work your way into God’s good graces. But, in his grace, God has made a way for you. He has sent his Son to us so that we might be forgiven and have everlasting life.

Jesus was raised up on the cross so that anyone who looks at him might be saved. When you trust in him, your sins are forgiven, and you are made new. It is a spiritual rebirth. But that’s just the beginning. If you are born again, you are born into a new life and relationship with God.

Session 5: John 4:1–5:18

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

When we trust in Jesus, the savior of the world, he gives us hope for both our present and our future.

Head Change

To know that Jesus has overcome sin and its effects in our lives.

Heart Change

To feel the hope of Christ in every circumstance.

Life Change

To actively share the hope you have found in Jesus with everyone in your community.

OPEN

What gives you comfort and stability during difficult times? Faith is an act of trust. When you put your faith in Jesus, you are entrusting both your present and your future to him. We will meet three people in this session: a Samaritan woman, a Judean official, and a paralyzed man. All three were in hopeless situations until they met and trusted in Jesus.

READ

John 4:1–5:18 (If you don't have time to read through this entire section, read 4:1–13, 46–54, and 5:2–15.)

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

How does Jesus approach racial divisions?

How should we respond when Jesus speaks?

What creates the change in the three stories in this passage?

Show Session 5: John 4:1–5:18 (10 minutes).

DISCUSS

Read John 4:1–42.

Let's start this session by understanding the context of Jesus's actions. Based on these verses, what is happening in Jesus's

ministry? Who is working with Jesus and who opposes him? Where, specifically, is Jesus?

Dr. Evan noted that this chapter occurs in the middle of social, political, and racial conflict. But Jesus does not align himself with particular factions. Instead, he crosses social barriers to show the world that he is the Messiah. What stands out to you about the way Jesus interacts with the social norms of his day? In what ways can we emulate his behavior in our culture?

Note: To learn more about Samaria and the Samaritans, go to Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

The Jewish people wanted nothing to do with Samaritans. But Jesus intentionally goes to Samaria and sits down to have a conversation with a Samaritan woman. Who in our society is like the Samaritan woman—outcast and ostracized?

After Jesus asks the woman for a drink, he talks to her about living water. According to Jesus, what are the benefits of “living water”?

We all have spiritual cravings that lead us to sin—self-seeking desires for comfort, control, appreciation, and success. But our deepest longings will never be quenched with earthly things. We can only find permanent spiritual satisfaction in Jesus. In the words of the ancient Christian theologian Augustine of Hippo, “Our hearts are restless until they can find rest in [God].” In what ways is your heart restless apart from Jesus?

The woman at the well reveals a little about herself to Jesus, but he already knows everything about her life. Jesus already knows about our whole lives too—every sin we’ve tried to hide and

every secret we'd rather not discuss. What do you think Jesus sees when he looks at you?

Jesus sees every one of your sins and yet he does not run away. Instead, he draws closer to you. Jesus, in his compassion, offers you forgiveness and restoration. And that is what we really need. In what ways does Jesus's forgiveness impact the way you view him and his grace?

The woman asks Jesus about temple worship—specifically, who worshipped in the right place: the Samaritans on Mt. Gerezim or the Jews in Jerusalem. Instead choosing the right site of worship, Jesus points to the right way to worship. In what ways do you worship God both in and out of church?

Note: To learn more about what it means to worship in spirit and in truth, go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

To a Jewish person, Samaritans were hated and to be avoided at all costs. This Samaritan woman was also an outcast in her own society. She was one of the least loved people of her time. Even so, Jesus remains with her and reveals his true nature to her. What do Jesus's actions teach you about God's love—both in general and for you personally?

Jesus says in verses 34–38 that he compares his work to a farmer sowing and reaping crops. By talking to the woman at the well, Jesus was preparing the hearts of Samaria for a harvest. His disciples would join in his work later in the book of Acts to reap a harvest of souls trusting in Jesus. Jesus has prepared a harvest for us, sowing seeds in the hearts of people, preparing them to hear the gospel. What opportunities has God given you to share in the work of evangelism?

What can you do to maximize your work in the “harvest”? “Jesus crossed the bridge no one else was crossing,” Dr. Evans said. “Jesus became their focus and divisions were broken down in a day.” In what ways can you “cross bridges” no one else is crossing? What can you do to overcome our societal divisions to tell others about Jesus?

Read John 4:43–54.

Jesus leaves Samaria and returns to a place where he is known and celebrated. According to verses 45–46, where is Jesus and what is his reputation there?

According to verse 48, what was Jesus’s frustration with the people of Cana?

In verse 50, Jesus tells the official his son is healed, and we are told the official believed without seeing proof of Jesus’s words. What stands out to you about this official’s faith?

When the official sees that his son is alive, he and his entire household believe in Jesus. Just as the faith of the woman at the well brought her entire village to trust in Jesus, the official’s faith led his entire household to trust in Jesus. In what ways has your faith in Jesus affected the people around you? What can you do to share the hope you have found in Jesus in your workplace, home, or community?

Note: For a deeper look at the royal official at Cana, go to Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study.

Read John 5:1–18.

Jesus then travels to a pool in Bethesda that was rumored to hold healing powers for the sick and paralyzed. Jesus finds a man

there in a hopeless situation. What is wrong with this man? How long has he been this way? According to verse 7, who does this man have to rely on for help?

Note: To learn more about the pool at the Sheep Gate, go to Go Deeper Section 4 at the end of this study.

The only thing Jesus asks of the paralyzed man is the desire to be healed. What areas of your life do you need Jesus to heal?

What's your answer to Jesus's question in verse 6?

According to verse 14, the man's disability was the result of some sin. By healing the man, Jesus was showing that he was not only our great physician, but that he was also able to overcome the effects of our sins. In what ways has Jesus restored your own life? How has he overcome the negative effects of your sins?

In all three of the encounters in this session, Jesus asks the person he is speaking with to trust him and to put their faith in him. What circumstances in your life do you need to actively trust Jesus with this week?

LAST WORD

Jesus's actions were never just for show. In both his everyday interactions and his miracles, he was seeking to introduce himself as the Messiah to the world. Whenever a person came across Jesus they were confronted with the question, "Do I trust and believe that this man is the Messiah, the savior of the world?"

The Gospel of John repeatedly asks you the same question. What do you believe about Jesus? If you have trusted in Jesus as your savior, John asks you a second question: Whom are you sharing Jesus with?

Session 7: John 6:22–71

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

Instead of turning to sin, we should always turn to Jesus, the Bread of Life, the only source of spiritual nourishment.

Head Change

To know that Jesus offers us sustained and secured satisfaction in him.

Heart Change

To feel peace, knowing Jesus is all we need in life.

Life Change

To believe in Jesus and seek to trust in him with all of our needs and in every circumstance.

OPEN

What is the best meal you have ever eaten? What made it the best? How did you feel after the meal was over?

There is nothing quite like eating a well-cooked meal with people we love. But no matter how filling a meal is, we know that we will be hungry again. In this session, Jesus describes himself as the Bread of Life. If you are spiritually hungry, he is what you have been searching for.

READ

John 6:22–71 (If you are pressed for time, you can shorten your reading to John 6:28–40, 52–58, 66–71.)

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

Why does God bless us and give us good gifts?

What does Jesus mean when he calls himself the Bread of Life?

How should we respond to God’s provision?

Show Session 4: John 6:22–71 (11 minutes).

DISCUSS

Read John 6:22–40.

The crowd who was fed by Jesus, who wanted to make him their king, tracked Jesus across the Sea of Galilee. But they came to Jesus for the wrong reason. According to Jesus, what was the crowd looking for? What was wrong with their motivations? The crowd demanded Jesus perform another sign for them so that they might believe. What they really wanted was more bread, not more teaching. They desired Jesus’s blessings more than they wanted Jesus. Why do you think it can be easier for us to look to Jesus for his blessings rather than seeking to know him?

As Dr. Evans said, “Whenever the physical good becomes an end unto itself, it becomes idolatry.” God gives us good gifts to

show us his character; to remind us of who he is and our need for him. What physical gifts are you seeking from God? What do you think your response will be to God if he does not give you those things?

Note: To think more about the signs of Jesus in your own life, go to Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus describes himself in seven “I am” statements. In verses 35–40, we see the first of these powerful descriptions: “I am the bread of life.” How does Jesus describe the bread of life? What stands out to you about his illustration?

During the time of the Exodus, God gave his people bread from heaven called manna through his chosen leader, Moses. The crowd thought Jesus was a bread-giver like Moses, offering daily food for hungry people. Jesus says that he is not a bread-giver—he is the bread. How does Jesus compare and contrast himself to manna, the bread from heaven? In what ways is Jesus better than manna?

Note: To learn more manna, go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

Verse 37 is one of the most hopeful, reassuring verses in all of Scripture. Jesus makes us an incredible promise. When we come to him, he will “certainly not” reject us. When are you most likely to think that God will give up on you and cast you aside? What hope does the certainty of salvation in Christ give to you?

Note: To dive deeper into verse 37, go to Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study.

Read John 6:41–58.

After his teaching, the people who were hostile to Jesus began to complain about him. They had known Jesus and his parents. He was just some local kid—how could he be from heaven? Jesus responds by comparing himself to manna again. According to verses 48–51, in what ways is Jesus like the manna God gave his people in the wilderness? In what ways is Jesus better than the manna in the wilderness?

The crowd was hungry, and they were not getting the bread they expected. As a result, the hungry people got angry and started arguing. But Jesus didn't give in and feed them. Instead, he continued to point them to the spiritual truth behind his physical miracles. What is your reaction to Jesus when he doesn't give you what you want? What deeper truth might he be pointing you toward?

Note: To learn more about the Eucharist, go to Go Deeper Section 4 at the end of this study.

Jesus was blunt with his audience. He was not giving them lunch; he was giving them himself and all of the eternal blessings that come with him. If they just wanted a meal, they were asking for too little. What have you asked God for recently in your prayers? Do you think you are asking for too much or too little? Why?

Read John 6:59–71.

The disciples were just as confused with Jesus's teaching as the people in the crowd. Some even left Jesus because they could not understand what he was talking about. What was the disciples' response to Jesus's teaching on his flesh and blood? In what ways can you relate to their confusion?

The disciples are similar to us. We can often relate to their questions, concerns, and even failures. Because of our similarities, it is not hard to imagine Jesus speaking to us when he talks to his disciples. He asks them if his teaching has offended, or scandalized, them. In what ways has Jesus's teaching been confusing, bothersome, or offensive to you in the past?

Jesus then lets his disciples know that his teaching concerns spiritual realities. He's not suggesting that his followers be cannibals, but that they bring Jesus's life into themselves or, in other words, believe in him. In what ways can it be difficult for you to believe in Jesus?

Note: To spend time meditating on Jesus's call to the spiritually hungry, go to Go Deeper Section 5 at the end of this study.

In John 2:24 we saw that Jesus did not entrust himself to his followers. In verses 64–66 we learn why. Instead of trying to understand Jesus, some of his disciples gave up and abandoned him. Why do you think people abandon Jesus today?

In Jesus we find life. Apart from him we find only temporary and fleeting satisfaction. Even so, some of his disciples left him. What are the things in your life that can seem more important than Jesus? What do you tend to crave more than Jesus?

What can you do today to reject those cravings and instead seek Jesus?

LAST WORD

In his first “I am” statement, Jesus reveals the spiritual blessings we can find in him. Like bread, he is a provision to us from God who will satisfy our deepest cravings. But he is more than a temporary meal. Jesus offers us sustained and secure satisfaction.

He is more and better than any of our temporary physical needs or wants. He will not turn you away. He will never throw you out. He will never regret his decision to love you. The only requirement to receive the Bread of Life is to believe in him.

Session 8: John 7:1–52

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

God’s purpose and timing may not align with our expectations, but his ways are always better than our plans.

Head Change

To know God’s plan is not derailed by turbulent circumstances.

Heart Change

To feel optimistic and hopeful about God's plan for your life.

Life Change

To trust God's timing even when people and circumstances tell us not to.

OPEN

What is your plan for the weekend? Are you doing anything fun? How would you feel if something spoiled your plans?

We are all looking forward to something—a good time, a good meal, a good rest, a good reunion. If something were to derail our plans it would be frustrating, maybe even heartbreaking.

As Christians, we have great hope in God's future, but our hope may disrupt our day-to-day plans. Trusting God and his timing can be difficult when we focus on our plans. But when we focus on God's timing, how he is making us like Jesus, and his glorious future for us, his timing becomes a source of joy and hope.

READ

John 7:1–52 (If you are pressed for time, you can shorten your reading to John 7:14–19, 28–43, 45–52.)

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What is the importance of God's timing?

Why can't you be neutral about Jesus?

What happens when Jesus transforms your soul?

Show Session 8: John 7:1–52 (9 minutes).

DISCUSS

Read John 7:1–13.

At this point in the Gospel of John, Jesus has become a controversial public figure. He has gained and lost disciples, made friends with Pharisees and Samaritans, and has authorities seeking to discredit him. In what ways is Jesus's reputation in these verses similar to his reputation today?

Jesus is avoiding Judea, but his brothers encourage him to go to the Festival of Booths in Jerusalem. Even though they don't believe he is the Messiah, they are worried about Jesus's reputation and the size of his following. According to verses 6–8, why did Jesus refuse their advice? In what ways can our concern for our reputation and following cause us to miss God's timing?

Note: To learn more about the Feast of Booths, go to Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

In your own life, how have you seen your desires come into conflict with God's timing? What has that conflict taught you? In verses 10–13, Jesus covertly enters the Festival and hears what people are saying about him. But no one speaks openly about Jesus because they are afraid of the authorities, who are trying to find and kill him. Does fear ever cause you to keep your thoughts and feelings about Jesus to yourself? What can you do to overcome that fear and to speak boldly about Jesus?

Read John 7:14–44.

Jesus does not arrive with an entourage or to public acclaim. Instead, he waits for God’s timing to make himself known during the festival. In what ways has the crowd’s opinion of Jesus changed from before the festival in verse 12 to after they hear Jesus teach in verses 30–31?

It is possible to be amazed by Jesus’s teaching, to believe that he is a good man, and even to respect his actions all while not believing he is the Messiah. But, as Dr. Evans taught, Jesus doesn’t give us the option to think of him as just a good man. We either choose to trust him as the Son of God or to reject him. If we reject Jesus’s message, who are we ultimately rejecting? Why do you think it can be tempting to stay neutral concerning Jesus and his message?

How would you respond to someone who said Jesus was just a “good man”?

In verse 18, Jesus compares the behavior of someone who speaks to honor themselves to someone who speaks to honor the one who sent them. As Christians, we are always to speak God’s message so that he might receive honor. In today’s culture, what pressure is there to honor yourself or to build a good self-image?

In what ways could you be a countercultural force for Christ by seeking God’s honor first and foremost?

In verses 25–27, the crowds deny their murderous intent, discount that Jesus is the Messiah, and even try to capture and hurt him. But all of these efforts backfire, as we see in verses 26 and 31. God can undo wicked plans and turn them to his ends,

creating good where people intend evil. His providence should give us a kind of holy optimism about our circumstances: even in our worst circumstances God is in control and at work. What can you do to infuse your perspective with holy optimism?

Note: To think more deeply about holy optimism, go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

This passage teaches us that God's provision is in his timing. Jesus acted on God's timing to remain silent, to speak, and even to avoid angry crowds. What can make trusting God's timing difficult?

When Jesus tells the crowds that he would go where they couldn't follow him in verse 34, the crowds misunderstand him, thinking he means to go to Gentile countries to teach Jews and Greeks. Jesus is talking about his Ascension but, ironically, the crowd's assumption is also true. In the book of Acts, Jesus's teaching went out to Jews across the Mediterranean and was offered to Gentiles. We tend to make assumptions about God's purposes, but we ultimately never know what God will do, when he will do it, or how he will do it. What about your current circumstances causes you to doubt God? Instead of rushing to figure out what, when, or how God is going to fulfill his promises, what can you do to trust his timing?

Note: To study more about the Dispersion, go to Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study.

In verses 37–39, Jesus again refers to himself as living water as he did in John 4. But this time he promises those who will believe in him will be overflowing sources of life. Not only does Jesus satisfy our thirst, but he also causes us to be sources of life for others. In other words, your faith should overflow into and influence the world around you. What effect do you have on those around you? What does it look like to allow the “living water” of Jesus to flow through you?

In verses 40–44, there’s a division between the people listening to Jesus. Everyone seems to have their own ideas about Jesus’s identity, as they still do today. But Dr. Evans reminded us that we only have three options when it comes to Jesus’s identity. He is either the greatest liar in history who knew he wasn’t the Son of God, a lunatic who falsely thought he was the Son of God, or he was who he proclaimed himself to be. Who do you think Jesus is?

Those who doubt Jesus in this passage note that he’s from Galilee, not Bethlehem, the prophesied home of the Messiah. We know what they did not: Jesus was a descendant of David born in Bethlehem. Doubt can cause us to reject Jesus before we look for answers to our questions. What doubts do you have about Jesus? How might the Gospel of John answer your doubts? What can you do to seek answers to your questions about him?

Read John 7:45–52.

The chief priests, or Sanhedrin, and the Pharisees see Jesus as a threat and fear some of their own leaders may have trusted in his teaching. As it happened, one of their own leaders, Nicodemus, had already befriended Jesus back in John 3. How does Nicodemus respond to the anxious leaders? What wisdom is there in Nicodemus's response?

The Sanhedrin and Pharisees dismiss Nicodemus out of hand, completely uninterested in speaking to Jesus. Their dismissiveness reminds us of an important fact: people will reject Jesus for no good reason. Even in the face of wisdom, people will choose to not hear Jesus for themselves. How can you prepare to face rejection in your evangelism and apologetics? How might being ready for rejection change the way you pray for people who don't know Jesus?

The religious leaders were sure Jesus could not be the Messiah. As a result, they refused to hear his teaching and misunderstood his purposes. When we don't recognize Jesus, we will miss what he is doing in the world around us. What can you do this week to seek the true Jesus, the Son of God?

LAST WORD

Faith in Jesus changes us. It causes us to trust in God's timing, even when other people tell us not to. It causes us to speak boldly about Jesus, even when the circumstances say it is foolish.

Instead of reacting to our circumstances out of fear or anxiety, faith in Jesus transforms us into messengers of God who are at peace in turbulent times. But that peace and confidence in God

should not stay hidden within us. Instead, we should be like Jesus, trusting in God and his purposes for our lives. When we are living to honor God, our faith in Jesus will cause us to become overflowing sources of life to the world around us.

Session 9: John 8:1–59

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

Everyone who believes Jesus is the light of the world, the sole source of redeeming truth in a world of darkness, find freedom from their enslavement to sin.

Head Change

To know that Jesus offers forgiveness for and freedom from our sin.

Heart Change

To feel patient and compassionate towards those who do not know Jesus.

Life Change

To live as a disciple of Jesus, following and obeying his teaching.

OPEN

When was the last time you were lost? How did you find your way back to where you needed to be?

In this session, Jesus divides humanity into two categories: those who have the light of life and those who walk in darkness. If we do not trust in Jesus, we are lost in darkness. But he does not leave us in darkness to find our own way. Instead, he offers himself as our light, life, and true freedom.

READ

John 8:1–59 (If you are pressed for time, you can shorten your reading to John 8:2–20, 28–38, 48–59.)

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

Why does it seem like the Pharisees don't care about justice with the woman caught in adultery?

Can a person believe in God while rejecting Jesus? Why not?

In what ways does Jesus express his divinity in this chapter?

Show Session 9: John 8:1–59 (8 minutes).

DISCUSS

Read John 8:1–11.

You may have noticed that the formatting around John 8:1–11 is a little different than the rest of Scripture. That's because it probably wasn't originally in the Gospel of John. Most ancient biblical manuscripts dating before the sixth century don't contain it and no church fathers or early commentators refer to it in their writings. This story may be a part of the oral tradition of Christ that scribes later added to the Gospel. We do know that Jesus did many things not recorded in the Scriptures (John 21:25) and this may be one of them, but most historians and theologians agree that John did not include this passage in his Gospel.

While teaching in the temple courts, Jesus was again confronted by the Pharisees. But this time, they were not alone. They brought a woman caught in adultery in front of Jesus and his audience, exposed her sin, and asked Jesus if she should be stoned to death. They didn't appear to be concerned with the woman's dignity or, as Dr. Evans pointed out, the justice of God's law. What do you think mattered most to the Pharisees? What do we learn about the Pharisees' compassion towards people in this situation?

The Pharisees were trying to entrap Jesus by putting him in a no-win situation. In their minds, he was being forced to decide between following his own teaching or the teaching of God's law. In either situation, he would have publicly proven himself to be a false teacher. What would you have done in this situation?

Jesus did not have to choose between following the law and showing compassion to the woman caught in adultery. He came to fulfill the law and to show compassion to sinners. This wasn't a no-win situation—it was the perfect way for Jesus to show the Pharisees and his audience what he was all about. In what ways does Jesus acknowledge her sin and show her compassion?

Dr. Evans pointed out that Jesus forgave the woman before telling her how to live, adding, "It's a lot easier to obey when you have been set free." God does the same for you. In what ways has Jesus set you free to follow him?

Note: To learn more about Jesus's relationship to the law, go to Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

Read John 8:12–30.

Verse 12 introduces us to Jesus's second "I am" statement. Just like when he called himself the bread of life, Jesus calls himself the "light of the world," using a natural illustration to reveal supernatural truth. Based on verse 12, what do you think it means for Jesus to be the light of the world?

Jesus says the one who follows him will have "the light of life"—the same phrase John used in John 1:4 to describe Jesus—and

the one who does not follow him walks in darkness. In what ways have you felt the light of life while following Jesus? In what ways have you experienced the “darkness” of not following Jesus?

When the Pharisees reject Jesus’s claim, he doesn’t get angry. He doesn’t fight or dismiss the Pharisees. Rather, he calmly explains his identity is rooted in what the Father says about him. In what ways does rejection threaten you? How do you react when people reject you?

Note: To learn more about Christian identity, go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

In verses 20–27, the Pharisees prove that they are walking in darkness. They are lost, unable to understand Jesus or the hope he is offering to them. Their ignorance, ultimately, is a terrible tragedy. It can be easy to vilify people who reject us, but we must remember that, apart from Christ, people are walking in darkness. How do you think you would you treat a Pharisee if you met one today?

What can you do to show compassion and love to those who are walking in darkness, even when they oppose or insult you?

Even though the Pharisees, the loudest voices in the temple courts, rejected Jesus, we learn in verse 30 that many believed in Jesus. We often focus on the people who reject Jesus and miss the quieter stories of those who trust Christ. Why do you think we tend to focus on the loud opposition to Jesus rather than the quiet acceptance of him?

How might our evangelism change if we focused on who might trust Jesus rather than those that might reject Jesus?

Read John 8:31–38.

In verse 31, Jesus tells us what it means to walk in the light. If we follow his teaching, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. What teaching have we learned from Jesus so far in John? What can you do this week to follow Jesus's teaching?

We don't often think of obedience as freedom. Many today think that obedience to a set of rules keeps us from being free. But, according to Jesus, we have it backward: his way is freedom, and living in sin is true bondage. In what ways has obedience to Jesus set you free from sin?

Note: To learn more about what it means to be a disciple, go to Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study.

Read John 8:39–59.

The Judeans who did not trust Jesus rejected him instead of admitting they were sinful. Despite their rejection, Jesus endures with the crowd and answers their questions, even when the questions are meant as insults, like in verse 48. What can you learn from Jesus's behavior towards a hostile crowd?

In what ways can you be like Jesus when you are rejected and insulted for following him?

Jesus's goal was to convince the crowd to trust and believe in him. He was laser-focused on their salvation and God's glory. But when people reject us, we can easily change the conversation from Jesus to self-justification. How might have you responded to the question in verse 48?

What are some ways you can remind yourself to be laser-focused on Jesus and God's glory as you tell others about him?

Note: To learn more about Jesus's claim, "I am!" go to Go Deeper Section 4 at the end of this study

There are people who are walking in darkness and Jesus offers them the light of life. That's good news! What can you do this week to be an eager messenger of the light of life?

[SD1]Make this a box.

LAST WORD

Without Jesus, we are enslaved to sin and walk in darkness. But he is eager to forgive us, to give us the light of life, and to set us free. Even when he was insulted, rejected, and assaulted, Jesus did not push sinners away. Instead, he drew closer to them, endured their questions and insults, and patiently tried to convince them of the truth.

When we meet people who do not trust Jesus, we should follow his example as kind, compassionate, and patient ambassadors of truth. In the face of rejection and insults, we should never get mad or try to get even. Instead, we must live like Christ, drawing near to people who walk in darkness so that they might meet the light of the world.

Session 10: John 9:1–41

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

Jesus is light of the world who heals our spiritual blindness when we put our faith in him.

Head Change

To know that Jesus fully forgives our sins, heals our past, and will never abandon us.

Heart Change

To feel comfort in the nearness of Christ, especially when the world rejects us.

Life Change

To trust in Jesus, being willing to tell anyone who asks about the hope we have found in him.

OPEN

When have you faced rejection? How did you respond to that rejection?

In John 9 we meet a man who was born blind. As we follow his story of redemption, rejection, and healing, we will see our own stories reflected in him. Knowing Jesus is the greatest gift we could ever be given, but not everyone will see it that way.

READ

John 9:1–41 (If you are pressed for time, you can shorten your reading to John 9:1–17, 28–39.)

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

Why might God allow difficulty in our lives?

Why were the Pharisees upset with the healing of the man born blind?

In what ways do we see Jesus's divinity in this chapter?

Show Session 10: John 9:1–41 (10 minutes).

DISCUSS

Read John 9:1–12.

It was commonly believed in ancient Judea that a child born with any infirmities or malformations was the direct result of a parent's sin. So, when the disciples saw the beggar in John 9, they immediately blamed him and his parents for his poverty and difficulties. We don't hold that belief in modern times, but we sometimes blame the poor and homeless for their situations. When you see someone asking for money on the street, what do you think about them? What do you assume led them to that position?

Jesus told his disciples the man was born blind “so that the works of God might be displayed in him.” Where the disciples saw a curse, Jesus saw an opportunity. What can we learn from Jesus's compassion towards the man who was born blind?

Dr. Evans taught us that God may allow difficult circumstances in our lives so that he might display his glory to the world. But when we are struggling—physically, financially, spiritually, etc.—it may be difficult for us to see God's purposes. It may even feel like God is anything but near to us. What are you tempted to believe about God when things are not going well in your life?

Difficult situations are not punishments from God. While we may feel the negative results of sin in our lives, God does not punish Christians with sickness or trials when we sin. Our difficulties are allowed for his greater glory. How might your

present circumstances—like that of the man born blind—provide an opportunity for God to be glorified through you?

In verse 4, Jesus again refers to himself as the light of the world as he brings literal light into this man's darkness. In what ways is spiritual blindness like physical blindness?

People believed that sin caused this man to be blind. When Jesus gives him sight, he is showing that he has power over sin, even sins that affect us before we are born. When he heals you, he heals you completely. In what ways is God's total forgiveness good news for you?

What sins in your life—if any—are hard to believe Jesus could heal?

John 9:7 tells us that the man was told to wash in the pool of Siloam, which means “sent.” The man is almost immediately confronted by a group of people asking him how he was healed. It may not seem like it, but this is the Christian story: Jesus came to a beggar, healed him, and then sent him out to tell others about the healing he found. Who has Jesus sent you to, specifically?

Read John 9:13–34.

We don't know why the people took the man to the Pharisees, but it is likely that they were amazed by what happened and were looking for answers. Since the man who was born blind did not know who healed him, they went to the most knowledgeable people in town. But, instead of seeing the goodness of Jesus's

act, the Pharisees only saw sin and error. What lengths did the Pharisees go to avoid seeing the blessing of a blind man being given sight?

Why do you think the Pharisees worked so hard to reject the man's answer? Why were they unwilling to trust that Jesus had miraculously healed him?

When people ask us where we found healing, we need to be ready to give them an answer. Do you feel able to answer people's questions about Jesus? How might you and the people in your small group prepare yourselves to answer questions about him?

Note: To think more about apologetic evangelism, go to Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

The Pharisees' primary objection to this miracle is that it's performed on the Sabbath. They reject Jesus's work because it does not line up with their expectations. What is your reaction when God does not work according to your expectations? What tempts you to think that God is acting "out of line"?

The Pharisees dismiss the man born blind after he calls Jesus a prophet in verse 17. His parents refuse to support him for fear that they will be kicked out of the synagogue. These rejections did not result from sin but from telling the truth. When we live for Jesus, we very well may be dismissed, refused, or unsupported because of the truth. When have you felt unaccepted because you follow Jesus?

What should our response be to personal rejection for the sake of the gospel?

When the Pharisees question the man a second time, they start with the phrase, “Give glory to God.” In essence, they are telling the man to glorify God by telling them what they want to hear. But God cannot be glorified with lies. When is it easier for you to forget the truth for the sake of appeasing others?

Note: To learn more about what it means to “glorify God,” go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

The Pharisees were so committed to rejecting Jesus that they refused to see the simple truth of the miracle in front of them. Look at verses 31–33. What does the man claim to know about Jesus? What do you think the man born blind could see that the Pharisees could not?

The Pharisees promised to kick anyone out of the synagogue if they proclaimed Jesus to be the Christ. The man born blind does not even get close to that, and yet, they still kick him out of the synagogue claiming, “You were born entirely of sins.” When we define people by their sin instead of their redemption in Christ, how might that affect our view of them?

Read John 9:35–41.

The man born blind is the first person John records who’s persecuted for following Jesus. By being put out of the synagogue, he lost his ability to worship, to hear the Word of

God read, and to participate in communal festivals. It might have been tempting to think of his sight as a curse. Despite the new difficulties in his life, what blessings did he receive? Do you think the blessings were worth the struggles? Why or why not?

The man born blind knows that following Jesus was worth the cost of persecution and is eager to find the Son of Man, or Messiah. He may have lost the ability to worship within the synagogue, but he met and believed in God himself. All told, the cost of persecution was much smaller than the reward of knowing Jesus. What things have you lost for the sake of Christ? In what ways is knowing him better than anything the world has to offer?

Note: To meditate on the cost of discipleship, go to Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study.

In verses 40–42, the Pharisees try to justify themselves before Jesus. Unlike the man born blind, they think they are free of sin. Dr. Evans said, “Until you recognize your sinfulness, you don’t need a savior.” In what ways does the confidence of the Pharisees prove they are spiritually blind?

Jesus forgives our sin, heals our wounds, and send us out to proclaim his glory. What blessings have you been given and experienced in Christ? What could it look like for you to see your blessings—your spiritual sight, salvation, and knowing Jesus—as greater than the struggles that come with proclaiming Jesus this week?

LAST WORD

John 9 is like a mirror: it shows us who we are, what we are called to do, and the hope we have in Jesus. Before Christ, we are all blind beggars. Jesus, in his unfailing compassion, came to us and gave us light and life. He washed us of our sins and sent us out to tell the world of the hope we have found in him. But not all people will accept us. Some will reject us unfairly—even our loved ones. But Christ will never abandon us. Even during trial, persecution, and difficulty, we know that knowing him is a far greater reward than anything we have lost.

Session 11: John 10:1–42

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

Jesus is our good shepherd who protects, guides, and cares for us, his sheep.

Head Change

To know Jesus offers us fullness of life today and eternal life with him.

Heart Change

To feel secure and protected by our sovereign shepherd.

Life Change

To look at Jesus's works and trust in him as the Son of God.

OPEN

What person in your life makes you feel safe? What is it about them that gives you security? Does that sense of safety change the way you behave in any way?

People who make us feel safe often put us at ease and allow us to forget about our anxieties and rest, even if just for a moment. In this session, Jesus calls himself the good shepherd, the Son of God who protects and cares for his sheep. He is our caring, gentle, savior who offers us ultimate security, from now into eternity.

READ

John 10:1–42 (If you are pressed for time, you can shorten your reading to John 10:7–18, 24–33, 37–39.)

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

What does Jesus mean when he calls himself the door? The good shepherd?

In what ways did Jesus clearly communicate who he was to his disciples?

Why were people looking to kill Jesus?

Show Session 11: John 10:1–42 (11 minutes).
DISCUSS

Read John 10:1–21.

This chapter begins with Jesus telling a parable, but the people around Jesus do not understand what he is trying to say. When has it been difficult for you to understand God or his Word? Where do you look for guidance when you are confused?

When he notices the confusion in his audience, Jesus retells his parable and takes time to explain what it means. Jesus is patient and calm with his audience so that they might understand who he is and what he offers to those who follow him. What assurance does it give you that Jesus took time with his confused listeners?

Note: To dive more deeply into how we should respond to confusion, go to Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

In the parable, Jesus refers to himself as the door to the sheepfold, meaning he is both the way to eternal security and a barrier of safety to those who trust him. What is the importance of Jesus being the only way into his sheepfold?

In what ways has God protected you, one of his sheep? A sheepfold is an enclosure, often surrounded by a high wall, where the sheep would stay at night. There are some who say trusting Jesus is restrictive, that following him hinders their

freedom to live as they please. A walled-in enclosure looks a lot like a loss of freedom. But, according to verses 7–10, what does the sheepfold protect sheep from?

What are some thieves in our culture that are only looking to steal, kill, and destroy?

Jesus goes on to describe himself as the good shepherd, the one who lays down his life for his sheep. According to this parable and Dr. Evans’s teaching, what does a good shepherd provide for his flock? In what ways is Jesus your good shepherd?

Read verse 18 again. Jesus makes a specific point to tell his audience that he will willingly choose to lay down his life for his sheep. He did not die because he was ambushed by thieves. He was not caught off guard by a pack of wolves. Jesus, our good shepherd, willingly laid down his life in strength to protect you. In what ways does seeing Jesus as your good shepherd change the way you think about (or deepen your understanding of) his crucifixion?

Once the people understand Jesus’s parable, they fall into division and conflict. His big claims—that he is the shepherd of Israel and under the guidance of the Father—led some to believe that he was possessed or insane. Those who defend Jesus point to his good works as proof that he was neither possessed nor insane. When in your life is it easiest to doubt God? What makes you think God isn’t “thinking clearly”?

Read John 10:22–39.

During the Feast of Dedication, Jesus returns to the temple where he is, again, surrounded by people questioning him. This time, they want to know if he is the Christ, or Messiah. In their view, the Christ would rescue them from oppression and free them from bondage. In what ways has Jesus shown himself to be the Christ in your own personal life?

Note: To learn more about the Feast of Dedication, commonly known as Hannukah, go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

Jesus had been performing miracles for months at this point. He had, time and time again, told the people who he was and what he came to do. However, they were still “in suspense,” as we see in verse 24. It can be easy to think the people in the Bible were thick and, if we were in their shoes, we would surely have known what Jesus was up to. But, even now, it can take us a long time to fully trust and obey Jesus. Why do you think it can be hard for us to take Jesus at his word?

Jesus points his questioners to his works. He asks them to consider what he had done, to see his actions as a testimony to his identity. What amazing works has God done in your life? In what ways does your life testify to Jesus being the Christ?

As a Christian, you are eternally secure. Jesus not only guides, protects, and cares for you now, but will also do so throughout eternity. No matter what life throws at you, you can always rest in your eternal hope in Jesus. In what ways does that hope give you confidence, peace, and joy today?

Note: To take a peek at the Greek, go to Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study.

But, as Christians, we aren't just waiting to go to heaven. As Dr. Evans said, "Jesus didn't die just so we could come to heaven. Jesus died so heaven could come to us." Our good shepherd is guiding, protecting, and caring for us right now! In what ways does having a shepherd like Jesus shape the way you live as a Christian?

Again, Jesus's words anger the Jews. They don't mind Jesus's miracles. They aren't bothered by his good works. What bothers, even enrages, them is Jesus's claim that he is God. People can see the blessings of God and still reject God. But receiving blessings is easy; accepting Jesus as Lord is hard. What makes it so difficult to submit to Jesus?

What goodness have you found in submitting to him as the Son of God?

Note: To think more about the "gods" of judges, go to Go Deeper Section 4 at the end of this study.

Read John 10:40–42.

Jesus leaves the city and goes back to the Jordan River, the place where his ministry began. There, many people come to him and believe in him because they've heard the testimony of John and seen Jesus's miracles. Like John, we have a testimony to give about Jesus, and we have seen his miracles in our own lives.

What can you do to share your testimony about Jesus with those who do not know him?

Dr. Evans asked two questions at the end of the video. Take with your group to answer his questions:

Are you a sheep, a person following Jesus?

If you are one of his sheep, are you staying near to the good shepherd? What could you do to be nearer to him so that you might experience his protection, care, and guidance?

LAST WORD

Jesus is more than a good person who did some good things. He is the only way to salvation, our protector, our comforter, and our eternal hope. In him we not only find eternal life after we die, but full life here and now.

Look at his works—he was not merely a man. He was and is the Son of God who came to us so that we, like sheep, might be guided by him.

Session 12: John 11:1–57

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea

Trusting deeply in Jesus is never in vain, even when we can't clearly see what he's doing.

Head Change

To know God does not always work in expected ways.

Heart Change

To feel Jesus's care for you, even when it seems like he is far away.

Life Change

To trust and obey Jesus, even when his commands seem unusual.

OPEN

What is the most outlandish promise you ever made? Were you able to keep that promise?

Jesus makes some big promises to us. His promises—especially of our future resurrection—can seem outlandish or even impossible. There may be circumstances in our lives where we are sure he isn't trustworthy. But even when doubt dominates our hearts and we can see no way for God to deliver us, we can rest assured that Jesus's promises to us—even the ones that seem impossible—are assured.

READ

John 11:1–57 (If you are pressed for time, you can shorten your reading to John 11:1–5, 17–22, 38–57.)

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

In what ways does Jesus give us hope?

What does it mean for Jesus to be “the resurrection and the life”?

What does real faith look like?

Show Session 12: John 11:1–57 (10 minutes).

DISCUSS

Read John 11:1–16.

At the beginning of this chapter, we meet some of Jesus's friends: three siblings from a family he loved. But Lazarus, the

brother of Mary and Martha, is gravely ill, and the sisters reach out to Jesus for help. We often do the same thing. When we are in desperate need, we cry out to Jesus. What situations cause you to turn to Jesus for help?

What situations are you tempted to think are too small or aren't worth praying about?

Jesus responds to Martha and Mary's message saying that Lazarus's sickness would not end in death. Dr. Evans pointed out that Martha and Mary must have had their anxiety put at ease: their brother would be okay. But Jesus does not immediately leave to heal Lazarus. Instead, he stays put for two whole days. Put yourself in Martha and Mary's shoes. What would you have expected Jesus to do?

When in your life has it seemed like God was staying put when you needed him most?

Note: To learn more about Jesus's relationship with Mary and Martha, go to Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study.

When Martha and Mary would have wanted Jesus to move quickly, his disciples didn't want him to leave at all. They saw danger around every corner, knowing that there were people actively looking to hurt or kill Jesus. Instead of moving to help their friends, they wanted to stay safe and hidden. When Jesus calls you to move, to act, or to obey, what fears tempt you to stay put?

Mary and Martha prayed in faith, but their prayers were not immediately answered in the way they expected. The disciples were called to walk with Jesus, but they were afraid to act. Both groups were experiencing a crisis of faith, and Jesus offers both groups the same remedy. Look at verses 4 and 15. What does Jesus want to show his disciples and the people he loves? What response does Jesus want to elicit from them?

It may seem confusing that Jesus says in verse 15 that he's "glad" he was not with Lazarus before he died. It seems contrary to his character. But his mission, as we have seen throughout this book, is to reveal his glory to the world so that people might believe in him. When he looked at Mary, Martha, and his disciples, he saw that they needed to believe and trust more deeply in him, and he was glad to give them that opportunity. Where in your life is it difficult to trust Jesus? Where in your life have you felt forgotten or abandoned by God?

How might these situations be an opportunity for you to trust Jesus more deeply? How might you trust Jesus to reveal his glory in unexpected ways?

Read John 10:17–37.

Look at verses 21 and 32. How do both Mary and Martha greet Jesus? What do you think their greetings reveal about their faith?

Mary and Martha see their brother's death as an unnecessary loss. In their minds, Jesus could have done something, but he

just wasn't around to do it. He was late. In what situations in your own life are you tempted think God won't be around to help? When has God been "late" in answering your prayers?

Jesus has described himself as Living Water, the Bread of Life, and the Light of the World. But a person must be alive to enjoy water, bread, and light. In verse 25, Jesus declares his authority over death, declaring himself as "the resurrection and the life." According to verse 26 and Dr. Evans's teaching, what does it mean that Jesus is the resurrection and the life for us? What difference does his power over life and death make in your everyday life?

Jesus not only has the power to satisfy and guide us, but he also has the power to save us. All he asks is that we believe. Read verse 27. Even though her brother has died and it seems like Jesus has failed to deliver on his promise, Martha makes one of the clearest professions of faith of any person in this Gospel. Even in her pain, her grief, and her confusion, she trusts Jesus. What does Martha's faith teach you about the nature of faith, even in dark places?

It might be tempting to think of Jesus as detached in this passage, more focused on teaching a lesson than caring for the people he loves. But in verse 35, the shortest verse in your Bible, we see very clearly that Jesus was overwhelmed with grief. Even though he knew what was about to happen, he wept for his friend. What does his display of deep emotion teach you about Jesus?

In verses 36–37, how do people respond to Jesus’s weeping?
Which of these groups do you relate to?

Note: To learn more about walking with Jesus in grief, go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study.

Read John 10:38–44.

Jesus moves towards the tomb to fulfill his promise to Mary and Martha, telling the people to open the tomb. But Martha, who just made a profession of faith in Jesus, has doubts about Jesus’s plan. She immediately tells Jesus why they should not do what he has commanded. While it might be easy to look down on Martha for her doubts, we should see ourselves in her. In what ways can you sympathize with Martha’s doubts? When have you thought God’s plan for your life was unreasonable, illogical, or poorly planned?

There are times when God commands us to act in faith or, as Dr. Evans put it, “move a stone.” We can sometimes rush to find reasons why it would be better to keep the “stone” in place, like Martha, instead of trusting God in faith. We imagine the side effects, the negative results, and the faults in God’s command. But we don’t always know what God is up to and, as Dr. Evans said, no situation is beyond redemption in the hands of the savior. What could you do to counteract the doubts that rush into your mind when God tells you to “move a stone”?

How might you turn the fears behind your doubts into expectant and hopeful thoughts?

Note: To think more deeply about your doubts, go to Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of this study.

Look at Jesus's response to Martha in verse 40. He does not pull away from her, scold her, or change his mind about raising Lazarus from the dead. What is Jesus offering Martha? How would you characterize his response to her doubt?

In the video, Dr. Evans taught that faith is believing God enough to do what he says. If you don't see God moving in your life, it may be that you do not trust God enough to act on his commands. What may be holding you back from trusting God's commands, especially the ones that seem illogical?

Note: To learn more about faith in action, go to Go Deeper Section 4 at the end of this study.

When Jesus calls Lazarus from the tomb, Lazarus walks out, still wrapped in burial garments. Look back at Jesus's initial promise to Mary and Martha in verse 4. While Jesus does not fulfill his promise in an obvious or expected way, he does it in a way that causes many, including Martha and his disciples, to believe in him. How did Jesus's unexpected method create a greater good than if he had fulfilled his promise in a simple or expected manner?

Note: To learn more about the resurrection and new life in Jesus, go to Go Deeper Section 5 at the end of this study.

Now think about your own life. Jesus may not provide for you in an expected way. But his way is meant to help you and the people around you believe more deeply in him. In what ways have the difficult circumstances of your own life led you to trust Jesus more?

How might his past deliverance help you trust him in future difficulty?

Read John 11:45–57.

The Jewish authorities are afraid that Jesus’s following will make them lose their status, their temple, and their nation. But that is a small loss compared to what Jesus offered everyone who followed him. In this session, we have looked at what we are afraid to lose when Jesus calls us to follow him. What are you afraid Jesus will take away from you?

Instead of protecting our small kingdoms and seeing Jesus as a threat, how might you and your community use what God has given you to make Jesus more well-known?

What areas of your life—areas that may seem hopeless—can you entrust to God’s plan and timing?

Which of God’s scriptural commands or promises could you trust with a renewed faith this week?

LAST WORD

The stage is set. You can feel the tension at the end of this chapter. Jesus has declared and shown himself to be living water, the bread of life, the light of the world, our resurrection, and our life. He has built a following in Israel, and the Jewish leaders are prepared to do whatever it takes to get rid of him.

But where does that leave us? Over the past weeks, you have studied his words and seen his miracles. Do you believe he is who he claims to be?

Jesus is not looking to trick or deceive us. While he may not work in the ways we expect, he will always keep his promises so that we might believe in him. Do you believe enough to follow him?