

John Chapters 1-4

Bible Study

How Great Thou Art

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John Chapters 1-4 Bible Study

How Great Thou Art

This book has been put together for your use:

- In your personal devotional Bible Study time.
- or
- For your Bible Study Discussion Group.

It is divided into several lessons; each lesson typically covers one chapter of the book of the Bible you are studying.

Each lesson has two (2) parts:

1. Questions for you to Answer.
2. My Comments and Thoughts.

I suggest answering the questions on your own before you read my comments on the passage. If you are studying as a group and not everyone has their own copy of this Bible Study, I suggest making sure each member of your group has a copy of the next week's questions in advance so that they can prepare if they want to. Preparation for a Bible Study is a great way to establish the habit of getting into the Word every day.

An online version of this study is available for free download at:

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John Chapters 1-4 Bible Study

How Great Thou Art

Introduction

My friend has lived in a nursing home for a couple of years now. It's not the prettiest nursing home I've ever seen, and there are some wonderful, and also some not-so-wonderful people who work there and take care of her. She's 89 and will be in a wheelchair the rest of her life.

She used to love to roller skate. She used to love to go to work. She raised a family and laid two husbands to rest. She's a lover of life, and she truly hated the nursing home for her whole first year there.

After two years, however, she has grown used to the plain fact that this is her home now. She tells me almost every time I visit that she knows she will never have her own home again, she will never have fine pictures hanging on her wall again, she will never go shopping again. She's a believer in Jesus, so she knows also that someday she will be in her forever home, Heaven. But, even though she's 89, Heaven still seems a long way off when she thinks about it.

When I visit her I try to bring one of her favorite fast-food lunches and we eat together in the dining room, then we go to the nurse's station to get her afternoon medicine, and then, if it's nice outside, I roll her outside and we talk and watch the traffic go by.

If she's having a good day, I pull out my Bible and read the Scripture portion I have chosen for the day, and we talk about it.

A few weeks ago we were sitting outside following a very great lunch/salad, the Apple Walnut salad she loves. It was a beautiful day, and she was loving getting out into the fresh air after many days not even seeing the outside. I had chosen to read the first five verses of John's Gospel to her:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of

men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” John 1:1-5

The traffic was pretty light that day, so we had a few moments of quiet after I finished reading the passage.

Then she said, “That reminds me of something...making the world...the stars in the sky...” “Oh,” she said, “*How Great Thou Art!*” And she started singing.

*“Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder,
consider all the worlds Thy hands have made...”*

I joined in, and together, traffic noise and all, we sat out in front of her nursing home and sang all the verses we knew of “*How Great Thou Art*”.

I knew in a few minutes I would roll her back inside to the life she really wasn't excited about, and I would be driving home to the life I loved.

But right then, neither of those things mattered at all.

Jesus was sitting with us outside her nursing home and He was all that mattered. He had created the world; He had made her and He had made me; He had come to earth as a baby two thousand years ago and died for both of us; He had risen from the dead and was alive; He had made sure we, at different times in our lives, had learned about Him and believed in Him; and He had a home in Heaven waiting for both of us.

Her nursing home, and my little 3-bedroom ranch fifteen minutes away were nothing compared to what we knew right then:

Jesus, How Great Thou Art.

Lesson 1

Questions for You to Answer

John:1-14 "Who is Jesus?"

1. (:1-5) John talks about someone called "The Word" in *verses 1-5*. Who do you think "The Word" is? (hint: for a little help, see *verse 14*)

2. (:1-5) John tells us six things about "The Word" in *verses 1-5*. What are they?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.

3. Why does John call Him "The Word"? How does that further describe what Jesus was all about?

4. (:6-8) Who was the person sent from God? And what was his job? (see also *Matthew 3:1-11*)

5. (:9-12) There were three ways people responded when Jesus came into the world:
 - They did not recognize Him.
 - They recognized Him, but did not receive Him.
 - They received Him.

What are some of the reasons they may not have recognized Him?

What did it mean to "receive Him"? Why didn't some?

The ones who did recognize and receive...how are they described?

6. (:13) What does it mean to be “born of God”? How is being “born of God” different than being “physically born”? How is it the same?

Born of God	Physically Born

7. (:12) Who has the right to become a child of God?

8. Always apply Bible truths to yourself. Ask yourself:
Have I recognized Jesus for Who He is?
Do I believe Jesus is God?
Have I received Him?

9. (:14) What event is John talking about when he says “The Word became flesh”?

10. (:14) What else do we learn about Jesus in this verse?

Lesson 1

“Who is Jesus?”

John 1:1-14

1. (:1-5) John talks about someone called “The Word” in *verses 1-5*. Who do you think “The Word” is? (hint: for a little help, see *verse 14*)

If you are leading a group discussion, your group could possibly come up with two different answers to this question. With either answer you can lead into Question #2.

Answer #1: Don't know. Let's answer Question #2 and see if we can then come to a conclusion.

Answer #2: Jesus. Right – how did you come to that conclusion? Let's see if Question #2 gives us any more clues.

Verse 14 gives us some more information about “the Word”, and should pretty well answer any lingering doubts that Jesus is “the Word”.

2. (:1-5) John tells us six things about “The Word” in *verses 1-5*. What are they?
 1. The Word was in the Beginning. So...how long has The Word been around? When everything began, The Word was already there. It doesn't say The Word was created in the beginning, but was there then, just like the “I am”, no beginning, no end (*Exodus 3:13,14*).
 2. The Word was with God.
 3. The Word was God. Since The Word was God, and was with God, that makes The Word the same as, but also separate from, God.
 4. Everything was made through Him. So, “The Word” is a “he”.
 5. Life was in Him.
 6. He was light.

Come to a conclusion: who was “The Word”? If there is still hesitation, skip ahead and read *verse 14*. This should seal the answer.

Answer: *Jesus*. Did you know all those things were true of Jesus?

3. Why does John call Him “The Word”? How does that further describe what Jesus was all about?

When I speak words to you, they are the expression of myself to you. Jesus is the expression of God. He is the way for us to understand and know God. He is God, and we can know Him. He is not distant or unreachable, and He wants to communicate with us.

4. (:6-8) Who was the person sent from God? And what was his job? (see also *Matthew 3:1-11*)

The person sent from God was John – not the John who wrote this book, but John the Baptist.

Why did people need someone to help them understand? Why didn’t Jesus just show up and say “Here I am – I’m God!”?

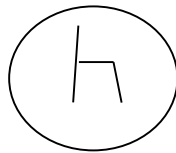
When people encounter something they don’t understand, or something unfamiliar to them, what do they usually do? Run away in fear. Like the child who has been told never to talk to strangers, then gets lost in the mall, but runs away from the policeman who has found him – because, after all, the policeman is a stranger.

If people don’t understand, or are afraid, what do they need to help them? An introduction. Someone they know and trust telling them not to fear – someone to pave the way. That was John the Baptist’s job: introduce Jesus to the world...pave the way.

5. (:9-12) There were three ways people responded when Jesus came into the world:
 - a. They did not recognize Him
 - b. They recognized Him, but did not receive Him
 - c. They received Him

- What are some of the reasons they may not have recognized Him? Some of them weren't looking for Him. They weren't thinking about Him. They had never learned anything about Him in their lives.

- What did it mean to "receive Him"? Why didn't some? "Receive" means more than believe. James tells us that *"even the demons believe - and tremble!" James 2:19.* In other words, even Satan and his fallen angels accept the fact that Jesus exists. But they don't "receive" Him. "Receive" means not only believe, but also means submit to the One I believe in.



If the circle above represents your life, and the chair in the middle represents the "throne" of your life, then the person sitting on the throne would be the one who's in control of your life. Are you on that throne....or is Jesus?

The person who has "received" Jesus has said to Him "please be the One on the throne of my life. I submit my will to Yours. I will do things Your way, because I'm so grateful for everything you've done for me, and because I believe You Are Who You say You are. You are God".

Revelation 3:20 gives us a word picture of that moment of "receiving": *"Here I am! (Jesus talking) I stand at the door and knock. (the door of your life) If anyone hears my voice and opens the door (receives Me), I will come in and eat with him (walk through life with him) and he with me."*

The ones who didn't "receive" Jesus, spoken of in this verse, were the ones who made a decision not to. They saw who He said He was. They understood. They were introduced. But they decided they didn't want to receive Him.

- The ones who did recognize and receive...how are they described?

"believed in His name"
"children of God"
"born of God".

Saying that they are "born of God" is significant, because prior to this only a Jew, born of Jewish blood, seemed to have the "in" position with God, being a part of His family. But, from the time of the first Jew, Abraham, God had said a true Jew was a person who consciously made a faith decision in Him. Jewish people had, through the years, come to think of themselves as privileged by their physical

birth only. They didn't think of themselves as needing to be "born of God" in any way other than their physical birth.

6. (:13) What does it mean to be "born of God"? How is being "born of God" different than being "physically born"? How is it the same?

Born of God	Physically Born
Only God, and the person being born are responsible for this birth.	A man and a woman decide to produce this birth.
The one being born decides to be born.	Blood is involved in the birth process.
God decides to give birth.	There is no decision to be born on the part of the one being born.
This birth produces life which will never end.	This birth produces life. But it will someday end.
This birth requires faith, belief.	This birth does not require any action or belief on the part of the one being born.

7. (:12) Who has the right to become a child of God?

It was true in Old Testament times, true in Jesus' time, and true even today. The person who recognizes their need of a Savior, who comes to realize who Jesus is, and who receives Him, becomes a child of God. In Old Testament times the person would realize the Savior was yet to come, and in Jesus' time the person would realize the Savior, Jesus, was standing right there with them, and today the person realizes the Savior, Jesus, came, died and rose from the dead.

Unlike physical birth, spiritual birth is not someone else's decision. It's God's, and ours.

8. Always apply Bible truths to yourself. Ask yourself:
- Have I recognized Jesus for who He is?
 - Do I believe Jesus is God? This is not "head knowledge". If Jesus is God, then I will want to know what He has said and what He wants of me. I can't be passive here.
 - Have I received Him?

9. (:14) What event is John talking about when he says “The Word became flesh”?

The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

10. (:14) What else do we learn about Jesus in this verse?

He lived with people just like us. They saw Him, and He was full of grace and truth. He was a real person, not just a vision or imagined being. He had a real personality. He interacted with people and exhibited characteristics which made him recognizable.

When you think about it, it is especially hard to be full of both grace and truth. Usually it is more of one than the other. Either you are way too merciful and let people get away with things they shouldn't, or you are way too legalistic and never give anyone any mercy for their imperfections. But Jesus was both. He was full of grace and full of truth. The perfect man.

Lesson 2

Questions for You to Answer

John 1:15-34 “Who is John the Baptist?”

Look at verses 15-18 and answer:

1. (:15) What methods did John the Baptist use to introduce Jesus?
2. Why didn't John the Baptist work through the traditional, religious establishment?
3. (:17) What did Moses give us?
4. (:17) What did Jesus Christ give us?
5. (:18) John (the apostle) says that “no one has ever seen God”. How can this be true, when John himself saw Jesus and was with Him for three years? – another riddle.

Read verses 19-28, and answer:

6. (:19-22) What three people did the authorities think John the Baptist might be claiming to be?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
7. (:23) Who did John the Baptist say he was?
8. (:23-28) How did John the Baptist answer when they asked him why he had the authority to baptize?

9. (:26) Did John the Baptist know what he was supposed to do for God? What was it?

10. When before did the lives of Jesus and John the Baptist intersect?

11. (:29-34) As John points Jesus out to his followers, what are the four descriptions of Jesus he gives to his audience?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.

12. (:29) Why did John the Baptist call Jesus the “Lamb of God”?

13. (:34) What was John the Baptist’s response to finally meeting face to face with Jesus?

14. (:33) How did John the Baptist know for sure that Jesus was the Son of God?

Lesson 2

“Who Is John the Baptist?”

John 1:15-34

Look at verses 15-18 and answer:

1. (:15) What methods did John the Baptist use to introduce Jesus?

Baptism in the Jordan River
Preaching
Riddles (:15 & :18)

If you look at a map of Israel you will see that the Jordan River is a few miles east of Jerusalem, therefore it is not at the center of religious activity, Jerusalem. Those who were the religious rulers of the day would have been quite offended and probably angry that anyone was giving the Jewish people the idea they could learn about God anywhere but in Jerusalem, at the Jewish temple, and especially that they could learn such things from someone who was not a recognized authority.

In verse 15 John uses a riddle, “He who comes after me...was before me...”, to begin to proclaim the message of the Gospel: Jesus is eternal...He is God.

2. Why didn't John the Baptist work through the traditional, religious establishment?

They were the problem. They had stopped pointing people to faith in the Messiah. They had been teaching people to look to them, the authority figures, not to God. They had been teaching people to obey laws, but not to know the God who made them.

3. (:17) What did Moses give us?

Law (right & wrong, conscience)

4. (:17) What did Jesus Christ give us?

Jesus Christ gave then and gives now both grace and truth. The law can make us know what's right and what's wrong (the truth), but it can't give us the desire and ability to do the right and say no to the wrong (grace).

Actually, all the law can do is inspire fear in us that we might do the wrong thing, or inspire rebellion in us to do the wrong thing, or discourage us because we can't do the right thing all the time. But grace can change us - turn us into people who hate the wrong and love the right, and have the ability to choose God's way and not our own.

5. (:18) John (the apostle) says that "no one has ever seen God". How can this be true, when Jesus was God, and John himself saw Jesus and was with Him for three years?

Another riddle. God is three persons. And also God is one person. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are three separate persons - and yet they are also one. Verse 18 helps us understand that although no one has ever seen God the Father, there are those who have definitely seen God the Son (Jesus), and to understand that part of Jesus' purpose here on earth was to help us know God by giving us God in the flesh to see and talk to.

Read verses 19 thru 28 and answer:

6. (:19-22) What three people did the authorities think John the Baptist might be claiming to be?

The Promised Messiah.
Elijah come back to life.
The prophet foretold by Moses.

In the Old Testament the prophets foretold of three special people whom the children of Israel were to watch for:

1. The Messiah (*Psalms 110:2*).
2. Elijah who would come back again and announce the coming of Messiah (*Malachi 4:5*).
3. A prophet who would speak with even greater authority than Moses (*Deuteronomy 18:15*). (This prophecy was actually referring to Jesus, but the Jewish scholars didn't realize it and thought it was a separate person.)

All three of these were supposed to be men who would “change” things – give a fresh start, a new day for the Jewish nation. These questioning authorities in verses 19-28 are basically asking John the Baptist: “Why do you preach to us the hope of a fresh start? We only recognize Elijah, or the Prophet, or the Messiah as heralds of something so new we would want to be baptized because of it. Are you any of these three? How can you claim to have more authority than us?”

7. (:23) Who did John the Baptist say he was?

None of the above

8. (:23-28) How did John the Baptist answer when they asked him why he had the authority to baptize? (verse 23)

- He quoted Old Testament Scripture (*Isaiah 40:3-5*)
- He pointed to Jesus.

The passage in Isaiah says: *"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth. The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"*

Such a powerful way to answer a question? Point to the scriptures - the authority that is higher than even the religious authorities - and say, this is what I'm doing - this is what I am obeying.

And then point to Jesus - God Himself - the ultimate authority, the One who has the power to break even the pride and blindness of the religious people who have all the answers but do not really know God.

9. (:26) Did John the Baptist know what he was supposed to do for God? What was it?

He hadn't yet met Jesus but he knew his job was to be His herald – to introduce Him. He was the “preparer” – *Isaiah 40:3*.

Paths were to be made straight. How do you make a path straight? Kings of that age had thousands of slaves fill in the valleys before them as they traveled, so that their trips would progress easily because the road was smooth.

John preached repentance for making paths straight in people's hearts (a heart wanting to know God - realizing the need of a Savior). This was a startling message to Jews who thought themselves worthy to be in God's presence simply because they were Jews.

Religious authorities of any kind who teach good moral living, but do not teach a personal relationship with God are just like these religious authorities of John chapter 1. Do not give your time to listening to anyone who says he is from God unless that someone also teaches that you need to admit and turn away from the sin in your life - and turn fully to Jesus.

10. When before did the lives of Jesus and John the Baptist intersect?

When Mary went to visit Elizabeth when they were both pregnant. Mary with Jesus, Elizabeth with John. (*Luke 1:39-45*)

11. (:29-34) As John points Jesus out to his followers, what are the four descriptions of Jesus he gives to his audience?

1. The Lamb of God - Who takes away the sin of the world.
2. He comes after me and has a higher rank than me.
3. He existed before me.
4. I saw the Spirit of God descend on Him - so I know He is the Son of God.

12. (:29) Why did John the Baptist call Jesus the "Lamb of God"?

Here's God again...helping the whole world understand something. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were small dramas to teach people they needed a Savior who would purchase their atonement by shedding his own innocent blood. In other words, the sacrificial lambs of the Old Testament pointed to Jesus.

(*Leviticus 17:11.*) The only way of salvation from sin is for that sin to be paid for by the death of someone totally innocent. Jesus was not just *another* "Lamb of God"...He was "the" Lamb of God. Once He shed His blood, died, and then brought Himself back to life...no lamb would ever have to be sacrificed again. (*Hebrews 10:1-4, 10*)

13. (:34) What was John the Baptist's response to finally meeting face to face with Jesus?

He told the world, "This is the Son of God!"

14. (: 33) How did John the Baptist know for sure that Jesus was the Son of God?

The dove. (The Holy Spirit)

Lesson 3

Questions for You to Answer

John 1:35-51 “The First Disciples”

1. (:35-37) What was the disciples’ reaction when they saw Jesus as “the Lamb of God”?

2. Was there ever a time when you realized Jesus was the Lamb of God...and then followed Him? When was it?

3. (:37-42) Who were the first three disciples?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

4. (:42) What are four different names we see for Peter in verse 42?

5. (:43-45) Who found Philip? Who found Nathanael?

6. (:46) What was Nathanael’s reaction to Philip’s “witness”?

7. (:47-51) What did Jesus do to help Nathanael believe?

8. What did Jesus do to help each of these men be ready to follow him?

Andrew

John

Peter

Philip

Nathanael

9. What ever happened to John, Andrew, Peter, Philip & Nathanael?

10. Who do you need to introduce to Jesus?

From today's passage, fill out this table and come to conclusions

Disciple	Reaction to meeting Jesus	What did Jesus Do?	Introduced? Or Cold Turkey?	How Prepared?
John				
Andrew				
Peter				
Philip				
Nathanael				

Lesson 3

“The First Disciples”

John 1:35-51

Begin today's study by remembering: John the Baptist's job was threefold....he was commissioned by God to:

- Preach repentance so people would be ready.
- Point out Jesus as the Promised Messiah.
- Point his own (John's) followers to Jesus.

1. (:35-37) What was the disciples' reaction when they saw Jesus as “the Lamb of God”?

They followed Him. They must have been very ready to want to know Jesus. John the Baptist had done his job.

2. Was there ever a time when you realized Jesus was the Lamb of God...and then followed Him? When was it?

Encourage people in your group to share their own experiences of coming to know Christ as Savior and Lord. Use this time to share your own journey of discovering and believing in Jesus.

3. (:37-42) Who were the first three disciples?

Andrew.

“The other one” (the other one was the apostle John).

Peter.

You will notice, as you study the book of John, that he never refers to himself as “John”. He always says...the “other” disciple, or, “the one Jesus loved”, or some other similar description.

Further questions: Peter, who became one of the most influential apostles...how did he find Jesus? Andrew went to find him & bring him back

So...What exactly did Andrew do to “witness” to his brother? He brought him to meet Jesus.

Who was the first person you told about Jesus? (tell your personal story of the first time you witnessed about Jesus)

If you had just met Jesus yesterday, who would you want to tell first?

4. (:42) What are four different names we see for Peter in verse 42?

Simon.
Son of John.
Cephas. (which means “stone”).
Peter.

Peter was very outgoing, very emotional and demonstrative, but not exactly a rock! What was Jesus referring to when He called Peter a “stone”?

Jesus knew, because He is God, what Peter’s future role as a leader in the fledgling church after Pentecost would be.

There is no record of Peter’s response here to his new name, but after two years of walking & talking with Jesus, he was able to understand and boldly proclaim: “*You are the Christ, the son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). That’s why Peter was called “The Rock”.

God sees what you are going to be.

5. (:43-45) Who found Philip? Who found Nathanael?

Jesus found Philip and asked him to follow Him. Then Philip went out and found Nathanael. What did Philip do when he witnessed to Nathanael? He told him about what he had found, and invited him to come check it out.

6. (:46) What was Nathanael’s reaction to Philip’s “witness”?

Skeptical.

7. (:47-51) What did Jesus do to help Nathanael believe?

He did something no other man could do. He proved He could “see” what any ordinary man could not. Why did Nathanael need that? Not sure why he needed it. But Jesus knew he did. Jesus prepares each individual to understand who He is.

8. What did Jesus do to help each of these men be ready to follow him?

- Andrew – John the Baptist’s teachings prepared him.
- John – John the Baptist’s teachings prepared him.
- Peter – Jesus spoke to Peter’s ego – to his need to be important.
- Philip – Jesus called him specifically. He was personal.
- Nathanael - Nathanael needed a miracle, a sign.

Why does Jesus help us get ready?

The people you are praying for...why don't you include in your prayers the request that Jesus help them be ready to follow him?

9. What ever happened to John, Andrew, Peter, Philip & Nathanael?

- John – An apostle. He ended up on the Isle of Patmos much later in his life, writing the book of Revelation. (*Revelation 1*) He is the only apostle believed to have died a natural death.
- Andrew – An apostle, he frequently got the “second handshake”, always known as James’ brother. He was nailed and bound to an X-shaped cross, and preached the Gospel to his executioners to his last breath.
- Peter – An apostle, wrote two letters included in the New Testament, 1st Peter and 2nd Peter. Crucified upside down.
- Philip – An apostle, served in Jerusalem. Took the Gospel into Syria, Greece & Asia. Crucified.
- Nathanael – An apostle, also known as Bartholomew. Took the Gospel to India. He was flayed alive and crucified.

10. Who do you need to introduce to Jesus?

- Make a list, by name if you can, of the people you encounter as you mentally walk thru your typical day, week, year.
- Make a list of family and friends.
- Make a list of friends you haven’t seen for quite a while.
- Write out your story. How did you meet Jesus? What has He

meant to you?

- Then make a plan to tell your story to everyone on your list:
 “Have I ever told you about my love for Jesus?”
 “...or.... when I gave my life to Jesus?”
 “Do you know who has affected my life the most?”

How do I introduce someone to Jesus?

1. Pray for them.
2. Tell your story.
2. Tell Jesus’ story.

Need more suggestions for witnessing? Look at the Helps #3-6 attached to the end of this Bible Study.

Here is the filled-out table...

Come to some conclusions about it:

Disciple	Reaction to meeting Jesus	What did Jesus Do?	Introduced? Or Cold Turkey?	How Prepared?
John	Followed Him	Walked in front of him	Introduced	John the Baptist
Andrew	Followed Him Went to find Peter	Walked in front of him	Introduced	John the Baptist
Peter	Stayed with Him	Spoke to his need for importance	Introduced	Brother, Andrew
Philip	Followed Him	Spoke directly to him	Cold Turkey	?
Nathanael	Declared Him to the Son of God	Challenged his skepticism	Introduced	Versed in Old Testament prophecies

Possible Conclusions:

- All of these men responded in faith to Jesus...but not all served in the same ways in the future.
- 4 out of 5 were introduced.
- All were prepared.
- All were addressed by Jesus in the way they needed.

Lesson 4
Questions for You to Answer
John 2:1-12 "The Wedding at Cana"

1. (:1-2) Why was Jesus at this wedding?

2. (:3) Why did Jesus' mother, Mary, approach Jesus for the solution to this problem? Shouldn't it have been solved by the Master of the Banquet?

3. (:4) Is He rebuking her for asking? What time hadn't come yet?

4. (:5-8) Why did the servants so willingly follow Jesus' orders, even to the extent of drawing out what had just been water and giving it to their boss to drink?

5. (:9) When did the water become wine?

6. (:9-10) The Master of the Banquet and the bridegroom...were both unaware of what?

7. (:11-12) What was it about this miracle that encouraged His Disciples to "put their faith in Him"?

8. Who are you most like in this story?

- Disciples. (learning)
- Servants. (blindly trusting)
- Mary. (trusting with experience behind her)
- Bridegroom and Master of the Banquet. (unaware)

Lesson 4

“The Wedding at Cana”

John 2:1-12

If you are teaching this Bible study, this wedding passage lends itself to dramatic reading with three speaking parts and one narrator.

Quite often a dramatic reading shared by Bible Study group members is a great way to read through the passage as you start the study. It takes the passage out of the "just a lot of words" category, and plunges it into the context of real people who lived and felt and wondered.

- Mary
- Jesus
- Master of the Banquet
- Narrator

If you decide not to begin this study with a dramatic reading, do start out by reading through the passage, and naming the people who were there:

Mary
Jesus
Andrew
John
Peter
Philip
Nathanael
Bridegroom
Servants
Master of the Banquet
Other wedding guests

1. (:1-2) Why was Jesus at this wedding?

He had been invited. How does someone get invited to a wedding? Guests are invited to weddings because they know the people getting married. So Jesus, having been raised in the area of Galilee, in Nazareth (close to Cana), probably knew the family giving the wedding.

Would Jesus have known about this wedding in advance? In *John 1:43* He does seem to be heading back up to Galilee. But, whether he was informed in advance or not, of course the answer is, yes, He knew. He was God. He knew everything.

Explanation of a wedding ceremony in that time:

- Several days long.
- Responsibility for the wedding was the Groom's – he was "giving" the wedding.
- The Master of the Banquet was sort of the wedding coordinator and answered to the groom.

So...Jesus was just walking around the countryside...he didn't have a job? How did He have time to just take off and walk to a wedding? And why were the disciples with him? Were they not working either?

It seems that Jesus and His disciples (after He had begun to gather them together into a group) were together some, then apart some. They didn't stay together as a group constantly.

But while they were together they shared the every-day things of life, just like the picture we see *Deuteronomy 6:4-9*. This was the Old Testament concept of sharing God with others...in the process of living... "walking through life".

Especially this was how parents passed on their faith in God and in the coming Messiah to their children. When our kids were growing up I remember playing praise tapes on the radio, discussing God at dinner, answering questions in the hallway as we passed each other on the way to different events, or just before bed. What Jesus was doing with His disciples was not too different from that – talking about God and truth and the important things of life – just "along the way".

2. (:3) Why did Jesus' mother, Mary, approach Jesus for the solution to this problem? Shouldn't it have been solved by the Master of the Banquet?

Here are some possible answers:

- She realized the Master of the Banquet couldn't or wouldn't do it.
- She had seen Jesus solve problems all His life.

- She cared about the groom & didn't want him to be embarrassed.
- She knew Jesus cared about people.

What did she think Jesus could do? Maybe she hadn't thought the whole thing through, but she expected Him to do whatever was necessary. She had, after all, lived with Him for thirty years! She was expecting Him to be the person he had been for the last thirty years.

So that brings up a good question: How do we know what God is like? How do we know what to expect of God? We know Him from what He says, and from what we see Him do as we walk with Him through every-day life.

3. (:4) Is He rebuking her for asking? What time hadn't come yet?

I think He was gently teasing her: "Why me, Mom? I'm not the bridegroom at this wedding."

So...was He ever going to be a bridegroom?

No...and Yes. No, He was never going to have his mother proudly looking on as He, in his earthly lifetime, joined himself with a woman he loved.

But yes, someday He will marry the one He loves – the totality of believers in Him who will someday be complete and ready to join Him for a marriage relationship forever.

Mary couldn't have known, could she, that she would someday be looking on at His wedding, not as His mother, but actually as a part of the bride of her son, as one of many believers in Him? Wow.

4. (:5-8) Why did the servants so willingly follow Jesus' orders, even to the extent of drawing out what had just been water and giving it to their boss to drink?

Somehow they trusted Him. Those water pots would have been ceremonially clean. Water would initially have been poured into them, then they were prayed over, so they could be used for pouring over hands in order to indicate people were "clean" for the meal that was to be served.

The people at the wedding got themselves ceremonially "clean" when they poured that prayed-over water on their hands. They had no idea, though, that

they were going to be sharing wine and a meal with One so pure and powerful He could create the wine itself.

5. (:9) When did the water become wine?

Sometime in between filling the pots with water and landing on the lips of the Master of the Banquet.

6. (:9-10) The Master of the Banquet, and the Bridegroom, were both unaware of what?

- Who had saved the day.
- Who was in their midst.

Jesus is working all around us in our lives and others. We are not always aware of it. Has there been a time in your life when you seemed to breeze through what could have been a catastrophe? It's possible you never knew Jesus was taking care of details behind the scenes.

7. (:11-12) What was it about this miracle that encouraged His disciples to “put their faith in Him”?

- He Revealed His glory through this miracle – like a flash from a diamond.
- He met the need at hand.
- He answered Mary's request (prayer).
- He showed some of His character (caring for the little things).

Haven't we seen them “put their faith in Him” before? Are they getting saved over and over again? (1:38, 1:41, 1:45, 1:49)

No. Each time they understood something more about Jesus, their faith increased. This is sort of like a child who believes in Jesus early in life. Often that child reaches several “plateaus” of faith - new understandings of who and what Jesus really is - and each of those increasing levels of faith seems to just naturally call for an increased commitment to Him. There is a part of each one of us that is able to exercise faith and wants to exercise faith. The Word of God is the thing that stimulates that faith. (*Romans 10:9*)

James 2:17 says that if faith is real, action follows. What action do you suppose the disciples took as they left Cana?

Well, they continued to be His followers. They kept listening to Him. Their need to know him increased.

8. Who are you most like in this story?

- Disciples. (learning)
- Servants. (blindly trusting)
- Mary. (trusting with experience behind you)
- Bridegroom and Master of the Banquet. (unaware)

Lesson 5

Questions for You to Answer

John 2:13-25 "Why is Jesus Angry?"

1. (:13) Jerusalem is actually south of Capernaum. Why does this verse say Jesus and the disciples went "up" to Jerusalem?

2. (:13) What feast of the Jews was being celebrated at this time?

3. (:14-16) What did Jesus find when He went into the temple? Why did He react the way He did?

4. (:15-17) Do you have a hard time picturing Jesus angry? Do you think He was angry here? Is anger always wrong?

Look up the following and find out some things the Bible tells us about anger:

James 1:19,20

1st Corinthians 13:4,5

Ecclesiastes 7:9

Ephesians 4:26

Proverbs 14:29

Revelation 15:1

5. (:17) When the disciples saw Jesus act like this, what came to their minds?

6. (:18-19) The Jewish leaders asked Jesus to give them a miracle or a sign to prove that He had the right to do what He did in the temple. What sign did He give them?

7. (:19-22) Why did Jesus answer them in that way, when later on He did many miracles in Jerusalem? Why didn't He just perform a miracle for them to prove He was the Son of God?

8. (:3-25) Why did Jesus not "trust" these new believers?

Lesson 5

“Why is Jesus Angry?”

John 2:13-25

1. (:13) Jerusalem is actually south of Capernaum. Why does this verse say Jesus and the disciples went “up” to Jerusalem?

The word “up” is not referring to direction, like north and south, as we might assume, but, actually, up and down, as in high and low. Jerusalem is higher in elevation than Capernaum (thus, up). (see *Psalms 125:2* – Jerusalem is not just surrounded by mountains, it is a part of the mountains.)

2. (:13) What feast of the Jews was being celebrated at this time?

Passover. Do you know the significance of Passover for the Jewish people of that time?

- Celebrated in the spring.
- Always in Jerusalem.
- One of the three times Jewish men were required to travel to Jerusalem so that they would always remember that all blessings came from God. And, it pointed them toward a need which was more than physical – every man’s deep inward need to be forgiven for sin so that he and God could enjoy knowing one another.
- Lambs were sacrificed to show that forgiveness could only come through shedding of blood.
- A remembrance of escape from slavery in Egypt.
- A remembrance that deliverance is from God.
- Families would travel together when they could manage it, and eat the Passover dinner together in Jerusalem. “Next year in Jerusalem” is repeated after Passover dinners even today.

Why was it so important that all these festivals be celebrated in Jerusalem? Jerusalem was the symbol of God wanting to dwell with men. That is where God had said he would dwell – in His temple – in the Holy of Holies. (*1st Kings 8:28-30* and *9:3*)

Today Jewish people revere the small piece of real estate that has survived from the original temple in Jerusalem, the Western or Wailing Wall. Slips of paper in between ancient stones attest to a continuing belief that this is where God hears, sees, and answers prayer.

3. (:14-16) What did Jesus find when He went into the temple?
Why did He react the way He did?

He found people selling oxen, sheep & doves, and moneychangers.

Why were people at the temple exchanging money and selling animals?
In order to offer sacrifices. Each person would bring with them either an animal to be sacrificed for their family, or money to purchase an animal.

So, if offering sacrifices was what they were supposed to do, why was He angry?
Because the merchants and priests were cheating people with dishonest money exchanges and unfair evaluations of animals brought for sacrifice. They were using the temple as a place to cheat and steal, in the guise of helping people spiritually.

The buying and selling and “business” part of their actions was not the problem – it was the fact that the leaders of the people were living comfortably with sin and thinking that God wouldn’t care because they were also in His temple, having journeyed to Jerusalem at Passover, as they were commanded to do. This was “legalism” - trusting in the rules to win God’s favor, instead of trusting God to change their hearts.

In the process of living this way, they were teaching the watching world that this was what their God was like (cheating, stealing, lying) – which was exactly the opposite of what God intended them to do. (*Isaiah 61:3* – The reason the Jews existed was “*for the display of His splendor*”)

4. (:15-17) Do you have a hard time picturing Jesus angry? Do you think He was angry here? Is anger always wrong?

Look up the following and find out some things the Bible tells us about anger:

James 1:19,20 - Man’s anger does not produce righteousness.

1st Corinthians 13:4,5 – Love is God’s standard.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 – Fools get angry.

Ephesians 4:26 – Anger should not last more than a day.

Proverbs 14:29 – It is wise to be slow to anger.

Revelation 15:1 – There is such a thing as the righteous anger of God.

Yes, Jesus was angry. Yes, God has anger, righteous anger. The reason we don't always see this anger is because He mercifully is waiting until an appointed time to exercise His anger. This small incident doesn't even come near to showing what God's anger will someday look like. He is getting their attention here, but He is not just acting a part. He is expressing genuine agony and zeal for the way things were supposed to be. If He was walking among us today, He'd be saying: "You are lying, cheating, stealing, committing adultery, swearing, hating – and yet you think that because you get up on Sunday morning, get dressed up, get the kids ready, drive to church, sing & worship & listen to a sermon, you are making God happy.....HE IS NOT!!!! HE'S MAD!!!! HE HATES THIS!!!!

Getting their attention.

5. (:17) When the disciples saw Jesus act like this, what came to their minds?

A verse from the Old Testament – *Psalms 69:9* - is what came to their minds. A verse which gave a glimpse to Old Testament Jews of what their Messiah someday would be like.

"Zeal" is good. It speaks of a feeling that is so intense it physically hurts. Zeal is passion. The Messiah of Israel was hurting inside at the awful reality of the difference between what the temple was and what it was supposed to be.

How did the disciples, untaught and unlearned men, know this obscure verse? They were uneducated, perhaps, in the way of the world, but trained in the things of God. *Deuteronomy 6:4-20*. Jewish parents passed on to their children the most valuable knowledge in the world – the very Words of God. Are you doing that? Do soccer, piano, choir, baseball, track, band...yes...and even basketball...have a higher priority in your mind for your kids than the very Words of God? Are you teaching your children the Bible? Don't leave that immensely important job to anyone else!

6. (:18-19) The Jewish leaders asked Jesus to give them a miracle or a sign to prove He had the right to do what He did in the temple. What sign did He give them?

They were relegating Him to the role of a prophet – Give us a sign! He brought them right back to what He wanted to teach – that He was not just a prophet - He was God!

The temple was the place where God had put His presence in the days of King Solomon (about 900 BC), but everyone in Jesus' day knew His presence had left the temple, just before the Babylonian captivity, about 500 BC. How did they know that? Ezekiel the prophet had seen the Lord leave the temple. (*Ezekiel chapter 10.*)

Jesus was telling them – I'm back!!!! He was saying He could raise the temple....and Himself....from the dead. When He actually did just that, 3½ years later, His apostles remembered what He had said here. Did the Jewish leaders understand what He was saying? No.

7. (:20-22) Why did Jesus answer them in that way, when later on He did many miracles in Jerusalem? Why didn't He just perform a miracle for them to prove He was the Son of God?

Because He didn't want them to just "know" He was the Son of God. He wanted them to be sorry for their sins, follow Him, obey Him. He didn't want people to simply have head knowledge. He wanted complete belief.

Just look at the wonderful teaching techniques used by Jesus in this passage:

- He was answering the question they didn't ask.
- He was pointing out to them how much they didn't know...giving them a hunger to know more.
- He was giving them something to help them in the future.
- He was willing to risk misunderstanding now in order to teach the whole picture later.

8. (:23-25) Why did Jesus not "trust" these new believers?

He knew their hearts. Many of them had head knowledge of Him, but had not yet truly believed. They wanted Him, yes, but they wanted to turn Him into what they wanted, instead of bowing the knee to what He wanted. Not time yet to trust the future to these "head-knowledgers".

6. (:9-18) Nic had the right response: "please explain". Jesus does. To what two events was Jesus referring to when he said the Son of man must be "lifted up"?

- Something which had already happened in the Old Testament:
(Numbers 21:8&9)
- Something which was yet to happen:

7. According to verses 16-18 there are two types of people in the world...condemned people and not condemned people. What determines the type of person you are?

8. (:19-21) Why do people not believe?

9. Did Nicodemus believe?

Lesson 6

“Nic at Night”

John 3:1-21

1. (:1,2) What different things do we learn about Nicodemus from these verses?

- He was a Pharisee.
- Member of the Jewish ruling council.
- Came at night.
- Acknowledged Jesus as a teacher from God.
- Acknowledged Jesus had done miraculous things.

Do you think, from what you have seen so far, that Nic knew God? John, as he relates this story to us, is painting a picture of a man who appeared to know God...but really didn't.

2. (:2) Nicodemus called Jesus “Rabbi”. What does “Rabbi” mean? What does this term tell us about what Nic was thinking about Jesus? Did he wonder at this point whether Jesus was God Himself?

- Teacher from God. (1:38)
- Authority, importance. (*Matthew 23:8*)
- John the Baptist was also called Rabbi. (*John 3:26*)
- Beloved teacher – term of endearment, familiarity w/respect. (*John 20:16*)
- Extraordinary powers of counsel.
- Today called “Rav”, or “Rebbe”.
- Rhymes with “hubby”.
- Literally – “my master”.

If Nic knew the scriptures, he knew it was prophesied that the Messiah would be both God and God's Son. *Isaiah 9:6, Jeremiah 23:5&6, Psalms 2:7*. Because he calls Jesus “Rabbi”, I would guess he hadn't yet realized Jesus was the Messiah – the Son of God.

3. (:3) Verse 3 is the answer...what was the question?

Jesus is answering the question not asked. A way to get Nic's attention. The question not asked was: "I'm not sure I'm going to heaven...what do I need to do?"

4. (:3) Jesus told Nic that he wouldn't see the kingdom of God unless he was "born again". How did Nic respond to that unusual term?

Literally. He had no understanding of this term. Three things about this term and this idea were new to Nic:

1. Your Jewishness isn't enough to merit you a relationship with God. (the sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people was circumcision...which was carried out at birth...and therefore not a personal choice of belief.)
2. This is for the whole world.
3. It takes personal belief - an action on your part.

Jesus is giving Nic something which will start him asking questions – thinking. The right place to go with curiosity is to the truth.

So...What was wrong with the first birth? Why was there a need to be "born again"? At the first birth every person inherits a body which is going to die. Every person needs to be "born again" in order to be guaranteed a future body which will never die.

5. (:4-9) Was Nic "born again" at this point?...did he have a personal understanding of what that meant?

I would say no...but it is interesting that Jesus expected a ruler of Israel to have understood that a spiritual birth was necessary. This truth was not hidden in the Old Testament. Judaism was a privileged position of being chosen to tell the rest of the world how to know God. But every Jewish person still needed to come to know God themselves, on a personal level. Every Jew, especially every Jewish ruler, should have known this.

How is it possible that a religious leader would not truly know God? It happens all the time. Just knowing the facts is not necessarily believing in God and "knowing" Him.

6. (:9-18) Nic had the right response: "please explain" . Jesus does. To what two events was Jesus referring when he said the Son of man must be "lifted up"?
- Something which had already happened in the Old Testament: *Numbers 21:8,9*. A time when the fledgling nation of Israel had rebelled against belief in God and had been plagued by snake bites as a result. The Lord told Moses to make a golden image of a snake on a pole, to raise it high, and everyone who looked to the lifted up snake was healed from the poison of their snake bites. (A gruesome picture of the hopeless condition of all mankind, dying from the poison of unbelief, and yet offered hope by Someone lifted up on a pole.)
 - Something which was yet to happen. (Jesus on the cross, the hope of mankind.)

How might the illustration of *Numbers 21:8,9* have helped Nicodemus to eventually believe?

Answer: Nicodemus was going to be there at the cross. When he actually saw Jesus being lifted up on the cross he could understand and believe.

7. According to verses 16-18 there are two types of people in the world...condemned people and not condemned people. What determines the type of person you are?

Belief in Jesus.

8. (:19-21) Why do people not believe?

Sin. Nicodemus was afraid of the light – he might have to admit wrongdoing – but with admission comes freedom. Freedom to choose new life.

9. Did Nicodemus believe?

We don't see a verse which specifically says so, but here is what we do see:

John 7:50-52

John 19:38-40

Lesson 7

Questions for You to Answer

John 3:22-26

“It’s Not About Me...It’s Not About Now”

1. (:22 & 23) What were both Jesus and John doing?
2. (:24) What is this verse referring to?
3. (:25 & 26) What were John’s disciples concerned about? Find the phrase...five words...which describes the problem they saw happening.
4. (:27-35) What was John’s answer to their question?
5. What would happen if you could not let go of a time of life, or job, which was never intended to be permanent?
6. In what way does this describe any job we do for Christ?
7. So, it’s not about me. There is something more important than my happiness. What in this passage will keep this from being a sad thought?
8. Read the rest of John’s story: *Matthew 11:1-9, Matthew 14:3-13, Mark 6:14-16, Luke 9:7-9*. How did Jesus feel about John? Why didn’t Jesus spare John from being beheaded?

Lesson 7

“It’s Not About Me... It’s Not About Now”

John 3:22-26

Opening Question: Think of a job you have done which was not meant to last forever. Have several in your group share what that job would have been for them, then ask the group to keep those memories, so you can come back to them later.

To fully take advantage of the context of this passage, take some time here to review the life of John the Baptist up to this point:

- *Luke 1:5-25* – Birth of John the Baptist foretold.
- *Luke 1:39-45* – Mary, pregnant with Jesus, visits Elizabeth, pregnant with John the Baptist.
- *Luke 1:57-80* – Birth of John the Baptist.
- *Matthew 3:1-17* – John the Baptist begins his ministry, baptizes Jesus.
- Then Jesus goes into the wilderness for forty days.
- *John 1:19-28* – John the Baptist answers questions by confirming he is not the Christ.
- *John 1:29-38* – John the Baptist points his own followers to Jesus.
- *John 2 – 3:21* Then Jesus goes to Cana, back to Capernaum, back to Jerusalem.

Then....*John 3:22-36*.

1. (:22 & 23) What were both Jesus and John doing?

Baptizing. What is Baptizing? Immersion in water to signify something or to illustrate something.

What did it signify to this culture?

- Jewish people were familiar with Mikvah baths (an immersion in water experience) as a preparation for major religious celebrations.
- Immersion represented a clean start.

- Immersion was like a signal that something was about to happen.
- Immersion was a sign that the person being immersed had made a commitment.
- It was a symbol of something which had happened on the inside.

Why was John baptizing?

He was urging them to repentance. Getting the Jews ready for their Savior.
Luke 7:29-30.

Why was Jesus baptizing?

Same reason. And he was also identifying with John's ministry and message – giving validity to it.

Why wasn't John following Jesus?

Answer will be later, in verses 29-30. Think about this question until we get there.

2. (:24) What is this verse referring to?

John was eventually jailed and murdered (*Matt. 14:3-13*).

3. (:25 & 26) What were John's disciples concerned about? Find the phrase...five words...which describes the problem they saw happening

“Jesus baptized more than John.” What were they concerned about, then? Was it jealousy? Pride? Fear? Possibly all of the above.

What would they have had to be afraid of?

- Their purpose in life was being taken over by someone else.
- Their large crowds had been keeping the Pharisees from giving them trouble. Persecution might increase if the crowds began to follow Jesus. In fact, that is exactly what eventually happened.

4. (:27-35) What was John's answer to their question?

His ministry was given to him from God. It never was supposed to last forever. It was a temporary ministry. He never was meant to be a part of the celebration of Jesus' Resurrection and the church. He was meant to be a prophet to the Jews of the Old Testament. He was meant to bridge the gap.

But...look at verse 29. John knows all this, but is “full of joy”, not fear. He was not unhappy about the ministry God had given to him. He wasn’t grieving or afraid about a life soon to change, near to ending. He had joy.

What was his joy?

Seeing Jesus appear on the scene was his supreme joy. It was his Messiah who got him out of bed every morning...not his job

5. What would happen if you could not let go of a time of life, or a job, which was never intended to be permanent? (Refer to the answers in the original discussion question as you began this lesson.)

Unhealthy results. Like a student who never gets past second grade because his teacher won’t graduate him to third grade. Or a Mom who won’t allow her grown child to leave home because she can’t accept the fact that that child has to live their own life.

Some things are not meant to last forever.

What would have happened if John had not been able to give up his job?

He would have retained his followers, but they and many, many others would have missed the Son, and their chance to believe in Him and have eternal life.

6. In what way does this describe any job we do for Christ?

There needs to be less of what I want – more of Him.

Results are forever....the job is temporary.

Think of a situation in your service for Jesus where this would be important for you to know.

7. So, it’s not about me. There is something more important than my happiness. What in this passage will keep this from being a sad thought?

It’s also not about now. Keep your eyes on the real life waiting for you.

8. Read the rest of John's story: *Matthew 11:1-9, Matthew 14:3-13, Mark 6:14-16, Luke 9:7-9*. How did Jesus feel about John? Why didn't Jesus spare John from being beheaded?

Jesus was crazy about John! He loved him deeply. Why, then did John have to suffer such a cruel death? Why didn't Jesus rescue him?

Because Jesus had His eyes on a peace and a glory yet to come, and John's violent death was a necessary part of the process of every person in the world getting their chance to believe in Jesus and reap the unbelievable future which He has planned.

The apostles and many other Christians throughout church history also experienced gruesome persecutions, so hard to understand except for one thing:

It's not about me. It's not about now.

Lesson 8

“The Woman at the Well”

John 4:1-42

A little background:

This place where Jesus goes in Chapter 4, the land of the Samaritans near Mt. Gerizim, has a rich history in the Old Testament records.

- This is the place where God spoke to Abraham once he reached the promised land. (*Genesis 12:6*)
- Jacob, grandson of Abraham, inherited this land and God's promises from his father, Isaac, (*Genesis 20: 3,4*) then gave it to his son, Joseph. (*Genesis 33:18-20*), (*Genesis 48*).
- This is the place where Joseph's bones were buried. (*Genesis 50:12,13*)
- The Jewish people were blessed from this place. (*Deuteronomy 11:29, 17:12*)
- When the Jews were taken captive to Assyria in 600 BC, the Assyrians sent “foreigners” (not Jews) back to this place to keep it populated. The foreigners settled there, married the few Jews left there, and then set up their own form of Judaism, which did not include worshipping in Jerusalem. These were the Samaritans, disdained and even hated by the Jews for their departure from “pure” Judaism. (*2nd Kings 17:24-41*)
- The Samaritans had built a temple here in 400 BC, which the Jews destroyed.
- Samaria is today part of the area called the “West Bank”

1. (:1-3) Why did Jesus leave Judea to go back to Galilee?

2. (:4) Why did Jesus go through Samaria?

3. (:5-6) In what town did Jesus and His disciples stop, where in that town, and at what time?

4. (:7-9) Why did the Samaritan woman think it was odd that Jesus asked her for a drink?

5. (:10-14) What was the difference between “water” and “living water”?

6. (:15) When the woman said, in verse 15, that she wanted some of the “living water”, do you think she understood what she was asking for?

7. (:16-18) What did Jesus ask her in order to help her begin to understand what “living water” was? How did that help?

8. (:19-26) What two “topics” did the woman then bring up...things which she had legitimate questions about, but which also kept her from having to discuss her real problem? What was her real problem?

9. (:27-30) When the woman ran back into town she told everyone she had found a man who might be “the Christ”. What opened her eyes to who He was?

10. (:31-38) A little look at Jesus' growing relationship with His disciples. What is He teaching them here?

11. (:39-42) What happened to the people of Sychar?

What have you learned from this passage which will help you as you witness to others?

Lesson 8

“The Woman at the Well”

John 4:1-42

1. (:1-3) Why did Jesus leave Judea to go back to Galilee?

(It would be helpful to show a map here, of where Jesus was when He decided to go up to Galilee, and how He went through Samaria).

Why did Jesus leave Judea and go back up to Galilee? Because the Pharisees were learning that Jesus was becoming more popular than John. Perhaps Jesus was trying to protect John a little longer. John’s safety appeared to lay in the fact that the crowds of people followed him.

2. (:4) Why did Jesus go through Samaria?

The verse says He “had” to. Geographically He didn’t have to. Socially He didn’t have to. Politically He didn’t have to. Physically He didn’t have to.

This was a place where most Jews wouldn’t even dream of going. They hated the Samaritans, for they were a hybrid-type of Jew who didn’t believe in worshipping in Jerusalem. They were unclean as far as most Jews were concerned. In fact, going there was going to make Jesus look bad to those Jews who were “religious”, working to keep every aspect of the law. But, He “had” to. It was a spiritual “have to”. Jesus had an appointment there with someone who didn’t yet know she had an appointment with Him.

3. (:5-6) In what town did Jesus and His disciples stop, where in that town, and at what time?

Sychar was the name of the town. Jesus and His disciples stopped at about noon. The hottest part of the day. (the Jewish day began at 6:00 am, thus the sixth hour was 12:00 pm)

- Drawing water was generally done by the women, in the morning or evening (cooler then), and this became a social time for the women.

- This woman came alone, and at noon, perhaps not part of the women's social fabric because she was ashamed of her life.
 - Jesus went where the outcasts were, instead of making a wide berth around them.
4. (:7-9) Why did the Samaritan woman think it was odd that Jesus asked her for a drink?
- She was a woman.
 - She was a Samaritan.
 - She was of "ill-repute".

Jesus went where people would respond to Him, even if they were socially unacceptable.

Where would that be today? Would you go?

5. (:10-14) What was the difference between "water" and "living water"?
- Living water – only need one drink.
 - Water – you will be thirsty again.
 - Living water – doesn't get used up.
 - Water – gets used up.
 - Living water – grows and spills out for others.
 - Water – If it's gone, it's gone. You can't make more for others.
6. (:15) When the woman said that she wanted some of the "living water", do you think she understood what she was asking for?

No. She knew she wanted something, that she had a need, but she just didn't understand either what her need really was, or what the solution to her need was. He was going to help her "see"....

7. (:16-18) What did Jesus ask her in order to help her begin to understand what "living water" was? How did that help?

He asked her about her husband, thus pointing out her sin, and thus directing her attention to the real "need" in her life – the need which could be met by "living water".

She couldn't understand because she hadn't admitted her sin to God. Perhaps she had admitted to everyone else that she wasn't "perfect", that she hadn't made all the right "choices" – but she hadn't come face to face with God and admitted she wasn't worthy to know Him. (*Psalm 51:1-4*), (*Jeremiah 3:11-14*)

8. (:19-26) What two "topics" did the woman then bring up...things which she had legitimate questions about, but which also kept her from having to discuss her real problem? What was her real problem?

Here are the two topics she used to try to distract Jesus:

1. Which mountain to worship in? (which church should I go to?)
2. The coming Messiah (let's talk about end times).

Her real problem was that she didn't know God. She couldn't worship God anywhere because she didn't know Him. He and she had a wide gulf separating them – her sin. She needed to begin a relationship with Jesus.

How did Jesus handle the "change of topic" problem? He pointed her right back to Himself.

9. (:27-30) When the woman ran back into town she told everyone she had found a man who might be "the Christ"...what opened her eyes to who He was?

He knew her. This is what will open the eyes of anyone. Only God can show each person that He knows them. It's a miracle from God. Pray and Go.

10. (:31-38) A little look at Jesus' growing relationship with His disciples. What is He teaching them here?

They were concerned about His physical needs and their physical world. He was teaching them to "see" the spiritual. To "feed" on food for their souls. To "refresh" with God's idea of fun. To "succeed" in the truly successful way.

11. (:39-42) What happened to the people of Sychar?

The ones who were disdained by all of Judaism believed much more easily than those privileged to have the truth all along. (the Jews of Jerusalem)

What have you learned from this passage which will help you as you witness to others?

- Divine appointments: Plan for them. Jesus knew He was going to “meet” this woman. Maybe we need to plan to meet people, too.
- Needing a drink: It’s a fine thing to have needs. It means someone can come along and help us – and maybe we can get a chance to help them.
- Telling the truth in love, not condemnation. (Jesus had every right to condemn, but instead He offered truth and hope)
- Just tell them “Jesus is the answer to your need”. This is what we know is true. Why do we wait so long to say it?
- The fields are white to harvest. But maybe not with the people we want to see harvested. Go to those who will listen.
- Move from the known to the unknown. Find out what they already know, then show them the next step.
- Get their attention. Don’t wait for someone to ask you why your life is so different. That only works in a small percentage of people. Do something to stand out.
- Remove the obstacles. Go ahead – speak up – mention sin. Nobody is going to like the subject, so don’t expect any thank-you’s for it. But mention it. Then they have something to object to, and you can tell the you don’t like it either, but there’s hope!
- Respond with truth, not argument.
- Wait and see. If they put down their water pots and run back home, don’t assume they will never come back. Wait and see. They may be coming back with friends.

Lesson 9

Questions for You to Answer

John 4:43-54 "The Nobleman's Son"

1. (:43) How long did Jesus stay in Sychar with the Samaritans? Do you have a guess about why He didn't stay longer?

2. (:44&45) Why were the Galileans so open to welcoming Jesus? Was it because they wanted to believe He was God?

3. (:44-48) It seems that Jesus is not too kind to the nobleman in His statement in verse 48..why? Look up the following verses to try to answer: "What is wrong with people wanting to see signs and wonders?"
 - *John 2:11*

 - *Acts 2:43*

 - *Acts 14:3*

 - *Romans 15:19*

 - *2nd Corinthians 12:12*

 - *Hebrews 2:3,4*

 - *Daniel 4:2,3*

4. (:49) The nobleman doesn't seem to even realize Jesus has just challenged him. Why?

5. (:50) Jesus seemed to be satisfied that the nobleman had faith in Him. What would Jesus have seen which made Him realize that?

6. (:51-52) Why do you think the nobleman inquired about the time?

7. (:53) Why did the phrase, "the seventh hour", make such an impact on the nobleman and his whole household?

8. Do you believe God heals people today? Why do you believe that? Does He sometimes not heal people? Do you think God has an even greater purpose than healing when He heals?

Lesson 9

“The Nobleman’ Son”

John 4:43-54

This is John’s first description of Jesus healing anyone. So far in His ministry, Jesus has been baptized by John the Baptist, called His first disciples, turned water into wine, cleansed the temple, told Nicodemus he needed to be born again, led a whole town of Samaritans to belief in Him, and gone back to visit his hometown, Galilee. But we haven’t see Him heal anyone until now.

After this, Jesus healed many, many people during his 3 ½ years of ministry. Each healing had a purpose, and each healed person was loved by Jesus and uniquely important in the spreading of the Good News about Jesus.

As we read through this passage about the healing of the nobleman’s son, ask yourself why Jesus is saying and doing the things He is saying and doing. Is He trying to accomplish anything above and beyond the healing? Why are this nobleman and his beloved son the perfect people to accomplish Jesus’ plan?

1. (:43) How long did Jesus stay in Sychar with the Samaritans? Do you have a guess about why He didn’t stay longer?

Jesus stayed two days with the Samaritans. I’m sure He had much more than two days’ worth of truth to share with them. But He had so many others to speak to and show Himself to, He had to move on. But what about the ones He left behind? How would they grow and know Him better and keep believing in

2. (:44&45) Why were the Galileans so open to receiving Jesus? Was it because they wanted to believe He was God?

No, they weren’t ready to bow their knees to Him, acknowledging He was God. But they sure did like all the awesome miracles He had done in Jerusalem at the Feast!

3. (:44-48) It seems like Jesus is not too kind to the nobleman in His statement in verse 48..why? Look up the following verses to try to answer: “What is wrong with people wanting to see signs and wonders?”

It is natural for us to be awed with miraculous things. But the Lord warns us not to make decisions simply on the basis miracles. He has reasons for miracles. They are not just for making this life more comfortable:

- *John 2:11* When Jesus turned the water into wine, it was a wonderful gift for the bridegroom and the wedding party, but the greatest thing that happened was that His disciples began to believe in Him.
- *Acts 2:43* When the church began at Pentecost, many signs and miracles were performed – mainly for the purpose of bringing people to the knowledge of the Gospel so they could be saved, baptized, and grow the new church with truth, fellowship and prayer.
- *Acts 14:3* Signs and wonders were performed as the church grew and spread in order to counter the poisonous persecutors who were beginning to attack the church.
- *Romans 15:19* Paul brags on God here as he tells of signs and wonders he himself has performed, with the end result that he has been able to spread the Gospel.
- *2nd Corinthians 12:12* Signs and wonders were performed to prove the apostleship of Paul.
- *Hebrews 2:3,4* God confirmed the truth of the Gospel message with miracles and signs and wonders.
- *Daniel 4:2,3* In the Old Testament, too, the Lord used signs, miracles, and wonders for the purpose of declaring His own Glory to the unbelieving of the world.

4. (:49) The nobleman doesn't seem to even realize Jesus has just challenged him. Why?

I think He is so focused on his son, and his huge need of a miracle of healing for his son, that he just doesn't care how he looks. Or what is said about him.

5. (:50) Jesus seemed to be satisfied that the nobleman had faith in Him. What would Jesus have seen which made Him realize that?

The Nobleman apparently knew the reputation of Jesus, and was totally convinced that Jesus was his only hope. He may not have fully realized Who Jesus was, or what His whole message was, but his faith was unwaveringly focused on this Man to save his son from death. Does Jesus require total understanding of all truth in order to reach into our lives and prove to us Who He is? I don't think so.

Jesus moves first, and only a little faith is enough to get the fire of belief going.

6. (:51-52) Why do you think the nobleman inquired about the time?

In the midst of his joy at hearing of his sons' healing, still this nobleman is struck by the fact that Jesus had done it!!! Yes, he was desperate when he came to Jesus. Yes, he begged Jesus to do whatever He could. But now. Now he begins to wonder...who is He? Is He really God, as I have heard He claims? Was I in the presence of God?

And so he asks...what time did the boy get better?

7. (:53) Why did the phrase, "the seventh hour", make such an impact on the nobleman and his whole household?

It was the exact time Jesus had told him his son would live. Only God could have done that. God Himself had healed the boy. The whole household knew. The nobleman and every person in his house bowed their knees in simple faith in this One Who could heal, this One Who had come to earth just as the Jewish scriptures had promised.

Why was the nobleman's son the perfect one to heal this day? Because a whole household of people in Capernaum were going to believe in Jesus!

8. Do you believe God heals people today? Why do you believe that? Does He sometimes not heal people? Do you think God has an even greater purpose than healing when He heals?

Yes, I believe God heals people today, and always has. We see it over and over again in the Bible. But, also, sometimes He does not heal or prevent suffering. Read *Hebrews Chapter 11* and you'll see how many people of faith from the Old Testament were allowed to suffer in this life.

Healing and miracles do happen...but sometimes they don't. God decides each case in His own way. Miracles are not only for the purpose of relieving suffering in those Jesus loves, but also to show everyone watching how Great He is...so that they can believe in

Him and spend eternity with Him in the Heaven He has prepared. Sometimes that goal is better reached with no miracle. I believe He can heal, but when He doesn't, I bow my knee to the One Who knows best.

Jesus, How Great Thou Art.

Help #1

“How to Understand the Bible”

1. **Pray.** The Holy Spirit will help you understand what you are reading, or urge you to ask for help when you need it.

2. **Observe.** Here are some quick and easy ways to do this:
 - Restate the passage in your own words. This makes sure you really did understand the passage.
 - Answer basic questions (ones you can answer simply from reading the passage):
Who is in this passage? What are they doing?
 - Where is this taking place? When is this taking place?
 - Ask more questions. A good question is any question that comes to your mind when you read a passage. There are no bad questions. Encourage yourself to be curious. For example:
 - Why are these people doing this?
 - What might they have been thinking or feeling?
 - Why didn't they do something else?
 - Where is God in all of this?
 - What does this tell me about God?
 - What about their culture do I need to know to understand this better?

For some of your questions you may need a commentary or a good study Bible to get more information. Or you may need to call a friend you trust to help you - or you may want to refer to an already-prepared Bible Study covering the particular book of the Bible or topic which you are studying. Questions are good! Make sure you get your answers not from opinions, but from what is absolutely true.

3. **Come to conclusions.** Apply this passage to your every-day walk through life. Do you need to change anything you are doing or thinking because of what you learned in this passage? The Word of God is not just for learning...it is for changing us. This is not just a book - it is communication from God Himself to you, and that communication is intended to make you more like Him. Do the painful and uncomfortable thing: ask the Lord how you should change based on what you are reading in His Word. Then ask Him for help to make that change. Then change.

Help #2

“About the Author and the Book”

Who is the author? (*God is the Author, but who did God use to pen it?*)

- The Apostle John
- He also wrote three letters: 1st, 2nd, & 3rd John.
- He wrote Revelation – at age 90.
- He was probably twenty to thirty years old at the time he followed Jesus.
- He was probably seventy-five to eighty-five years old at the time he wrote this book.
- It is thought he was the last of the twelve apostles to die.

Look up the following verses and ask yourself the question: “What do I learn about John in this passage?” After you have filled in all the possible answers, check the answers on the next page to see how you did:

Mark 1:19, 20

Matthew 20:20-24

Mark 3:17

John 21:1-7

John 19:26-27

Mark 5:37-43

John 20:3-8

John 13:21-26

Matthew 17:1-9

Here are the answers:

Mark 1:19, 20

- Father, Zebedee.
- Brother, James.
- Occupation, Fisherman.
- From the Galilee area.
- From a prosperous family (they had servants). *John 1:35-40*
- One of the first disciples of Jesus.
- Before that, a disciple of John the Baptist.

Matthew 20:20-24

- Mother, Salome, was an ambitious mother. She wanted the highest places for her sons.

Mark 3:17

- Nickname for John and James: Sons of Thunder.

John 21:1-7

- The first to recognize the Lord on Galilee's shore.

John 19:26-27

- The only disciple recorded as present at the crucifixion.
- Appointed to care for Mary, mother of Jesus.

Mark 5:37-43

- He was one of three apostles in the "inner circle."

John 20:3-8

- He was the first man to reach the tomb, look in, and believe.

John 13:21-26

- At the Last Supper, leaned on Jesus' bosom.
- John, in this book, always referred to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved", or "the other disciple", but never by his own name.

Matthew 17:1-9

- He was with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration. Only the three men went with Jesus: Peter, James, John.

Who was he writing to?

- John writes to the Christian community. The temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed in 70 AD, fifteen or twenty years earlier. Christians as well as Jews were scattered all over the known world. There were communities of Christians throughout the Mediterranean area, into Asia and Turkey and throughout the Roman empire.
- This Gospel account was no doubt meant to be circulated.
- The Christians who read this already knew a lot about Jesus because the other three Gospels had previously been written and circulated.
- The church was not by now predominantly Jewish.
- The church was still under great persecution for their faith.
- His readers may or may not have known John personally. They probably knew about him by reputation. There would have been by now three generations of Christians, some of whom never had physically seen Jesus, and never had known any of the apostles.
- John's Gospel carries weight because of his reputation.

When was it written? A.D. 85-95 – It was the last Gospel to be written.

How does John's Gospel fit in with the rest of the Bible?

- It describes the life of Jesus, as do the other three Gospels. Since it was written so much later than they, it contains some things that they do not, and leaves out much that they cover.
- It ends, as do the other Gospels, before the beginning of the book of Acts. However, the book of Acts had already been written.
- Paul was probably dead by the time this book was written.
- Location? The story of the book takes place in Israel.
- Time Line? The story of the book takes place from the beginning of Jesus' ministry, in approximately 27 BC, to Jesus' death and resurrection in approximately 30 AD. John does not cover Jesus' birth and early life.

Why Was It Written? John himself answers this in *John 20:30, 31*.

The audience for this Gospel, remember, were Jewish and non-Jewish people who knew the story of Jesus' life, probably second-hand. John was concerned that people know how to "pass it on". Each new generation had to know The Word personally. John was not simply imparting facts or telling a story. He was introducing Jesus to his readers – and giving them a tool to "pass-it-on".

What should I get out of it?

By the time you get through studying this book, you should be able to solidly confirm in your mind that Jesus is God, know why you believe it, and be able to communicate that to someone else.

Help #3

“Exactly What is Witnessing?”

I have four favorite verses which help me understand what witnessing is, and give me the urgency to try to do it, and to continue to learn so that I will get better and better at it:

Matthew 28:19, 20
Acts 1:8
1st Peter 3:15
Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Matthew 28: 19 & 20 says: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Just before Jesus left this earth to go back with the Father, he left us these very simple directions. After his followers had seen him alive, after that cruel death on the cross, and after they had had time to realize the way His resurrection would now change the world, they were given a job to do: Tell other people about this.

This is our directive, too. Plain and simple. Go and tell. We are not told to fight back against those who did this to Jesus...we are not told to go and hide until He returns...we are not told to share our wonderful story with only those whom we love and care for...we are just told to go and introduce other people to Jesus.

So, it's not a question of "Should I?" but "How can I?".

Acts 1:8 says: *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

The people who heard Jesus say these words had a few days to wait until the Holy Spirit would descend on them as a group. Then they would find themselves

filled with the fire of God, desirous of only one thing - telling others about the Messiah of Israel...Messiah of the world.

But you and I don't have to wait. At the moment we bowed our knee to Jesus and accepted Him as our Lord and Savior...at that moment the Holy Spirit came to live within us - and He filled us with Himself. We, too, have the fire of God - the power and desire to be witnesses.

You may be asking..."Well then, why don't I feel that way? Why am I so hesitant to speak of Jesus? Why am I so tongue-tied when I see that I could speak of Jesus? Why do I never even seem to think about it?

Good question. It's because the fire within you has been banked...tamped down with the cares of this life, the desire for the things of this world, and covered over with unconfessed sin.

But, do not doubt it - the fire is there. Let's blow on it a little bit. If you realize, as we are talking about this, that there is some unconfessed sin in your life, confess it and turn away from it.

If you realize you are worrying your life away, ask Jesus to change your attitude.

If you are in love with the things which give you a comfortable life, ask Him to open your eyes. Ask Him to show you what a dump this world is...that the very nicest and most beautiful thing you can desire in this world is absolutely trash compared to the home that is waiting for you.

Then look with new eyes at your Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria - your home town, your state, your country - and the whole rest of the world. There are people out there just waiting to be told the story of Jesus - and you have the fire to do it!

OK! I'm stoked up! Ready to go! What do I say?

1st Peter 3:15 says: *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear..."*

Time to get prepared. That's what you'll find in Helps #4 & 5 - learn how to talk about the story of Jesus and the plan of salvation.

And after we are prepared then the next step is so sweet - just sit, walk, lie down and get up.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says: *"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates."*

The Old Testament Israelites were told by God to talk about Him as they walked through life. Not to talk about their love for Him only at their weekly meetings, not to share their fire for God only when an audience gathered for a speech...but to talk about God and the things He has done when they were sitting at home with family, when they were walking along the road with strangers, when they were laying down to go to sleep at night, and when they arose in the morning. They were to find ways to share God's presence in the way they dressed and in the way they cut their hair. Their houses were to be testimonies to the worship of the One, True God.

And that's what we are to do, too. Just start talking about what God is teaching you. About how prayer has made a difference in your life. You talk about lots of things every day. Talk about God the most.

So...exactly what is witnessing? It's telling the people in your life about Jesus - about His birth, life, death and resurrection - and about how accepting Him for who He is means the difference between eternity with God and eternity without God. As believers in Christ we have a command to witness, we have been given the power to witness, we can learn what to say, and we can say it as we walk through our everyday lives.

Next: Help #4: "How to Talk About Believing in Jesus"

Help #4

“How to Talk About Believing in Jesus”

- ❖ First of all, share your own story of how you came to know Christ. (Find out how to do this in Help #5.)
- ❖ Then, use a simple way to point out a few scriptures and talk through what they mean. I use “The Four Spiritual Laws” most of the time because it was the first plan of salvation I learned to use when I first became a believer in Christ in 1965. As a new believer I was encouraged to learn “The Four Spiritual Laws” myself, memorize the verses which were included in a tract we handed out, and then to use that new knowledge to tell others about Christ. I have used this easy method of witnessing ever since.
- ❖ Taken from GotQuestions.org, here are “The Four Spiritual Laws”:

“The Four Spiritual Laws are a way of sharing the good news of the salvation that is available through faith in Jesus Christ. It is a simple way of organizing the important information in the Gospel into four points.

The First of the Four Spiritual Laws is, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” John 3:16 tells us, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*” John 10:10 gives us the reason that Jesus came, “*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*” What is blocking us from God’s love? What is preventing us from having an abundant life?

The Second of the Four Spiritual Laws is, “Humanity is tainted by sin and is therefore separated from God. As a result, we cannot know God’s wonderful plan for our lives.” Romans 3:23 affirms this information, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” Romans 6:23 gives us the consequences of sin, “*the wages of sin is death.*” God created us to have fellowship with Him. However, humanity brought sin into the world, and is therefore separated from God. We have ruined the relationship with Him that God intended us to have.

What is the solution?

The Third of the Four Spiritual Laws is, “Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for our sin. Through Jesus Christ, we can have our sins forgiven and restore a right relationship with God.” Romans 5:8 tells us, “*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*”

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 informs us of what we need to know and believe in order to be saved, “...*that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...*” Jesus Himself declares that He is the only way of salvation in John 14:6, “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” How can I receive this wonderful gift of salvation?

The Fourth of the Four Spiritual Laws is, “We must place our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior in order to receive the gift of salvation and know God’s wonderful plan for our lives.” John 1:12 describes this for us, “*Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.*” Acts 16:31 says it very clearly, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved!*” We can be saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone (*Ephesians 2:8-9*).

If you want to trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior, say the following words to God. Saying these words will not save you, but trusting in Christ will! This prayer is simply a way to express to God your faith in Him and thank Him for providing for your salvation. “God, I know that I have sinned against you and deserve punishment. But Jesus Christ took the punishment that I deserve so that through faith in Him I could be forgiven. I place my trust in You for salvation. Thank You for Your wonderful grace and forgiveness – the gift of eternal life! Amen!”
<https://www.gotquestions.org/four-spiritual-laws.html>

- ❖ Here are a few questions you might ask as conversation-openers if you need to:
 - If you would die tonight, do you know for sure you would go to heaven?
 - Did you know the Bible says we can know for sure we are going to heaven?
 - Do you feel God is interested in you personally?
 - Did you know the Bible teaches that God is interested in you personally?

- If you would stand before God tonight, and He would ask you: “Why would I let you into my Heaven?” What would you say?
- Have you ever wondered if the story of Jesus was true?
- Have you ever wondered if you will go to heaven when you die?
- Are you afraid to die?
- Do you believe in Jesus? What does that mean to you?
- Do you wonder how to tell your children about God?
- Do you feel like you know what your purpose in life is?
- Do you have questions about God?
- Do you believe God exists?
- Do you believe the Bible is true?
- Did you know God actually has a plan for your life?

As your acquaintance responds to any of these questions you can easily say: “I have found some easy-to-understand answers to my questions in the Bible – Have you ever heard of the Four Spiritual Laws? These are four simple basic things taught in the Bible about God’s relationship to people – would you be interested in seeing what they are?”

- ❖ Remember as you talk – the work of creating a desire to know Christ is not your job. Your job is to tell the story. The Holy Spirit Himself will help your listener be curious, think of questions, and feel drawn toward God.
- ❖ You don’t need to push for a decision. You are not selling. God Himself will give each person a great desire to make a decision to believe in Him. But you can certainly ask the question: “Do you want to make a commitment of your life to Jesus?” If the answer is yes – offer to pray with your friend as they tell Jesus they believe in Him and want Him to be their Savior and Lord.
- ❖ Remember – every person on earth has their own time to come to that decision. And not every person will choose Jesus. But you don’t know who will and who won’t – only God knows that. So relax, be loving and caring, and pray that God will do His wonderful work of convicting of sin and opening eyes to the gift of salvation as you tell the story of Jesus.

Next: Help #5 “How to Tell Your Story”

Help #5

“How to Tell Your Story”

Here's a short little worksheet - as you think it through and fill it out you will find you have a nice summary of your own personal testimony.

After you see what your story is, practice telling it a few times. Practice on your kids, your friends, your husband, your Mom & Dad, your teachers...anyone who will listen for five or ten minutes. Then pray that God will give you an opportunity to tell someone you love - someone who doesn't know Jesus - your story of how you came to know Him.

The first two questions will help you define your life before knowing Christ. The second two questions are about the time in your life when you met Christ. The last two questions are about your life since Jesus became the center.

1. Where were you spiritually before giving your life to Jesus, and how did this affect your feelings, attitudes, actions, and relationships?
2. What caused you to begin considering God/Jesus as a solution to your needs?
3. What realization did you come to that finally motivated you to commit your life to Jesus?

Help #6

“How to Share Your Faith with Someone in a Cult or False Religion”

Here's my outline:

- What is a Cult?
- What is a False Religion?
- Is there one way to witness to anyone in any cult or false religion?
- What if?

What is a Cult?

A cult is any religious group calling themselves **Christian** which:
does not believe that the One and Only, True God is Jesus Christ.

“The two most well-known examples of cults today are the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons. Both groups claim to be Christian, yet both deny the deity of Christ and salvation by faith alone. Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons believe many things that are in agreement with or similar to what the Bible teaches. However, the fact that they deny the deity of Christ and preach a salvation by works qualifies them as cults. Many Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and members of other cults are moral people who genuinely believe they hold the truth. As Christians, our hope and prayer must be that many people involved in cults will see through the lies and will be drawn to the truth of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone.” - *from GotQuestions.org*

Here are a few other cults you may have run into or heard about:

- Scientology
- Christian Science
- Jesus Only
- Destiny Church

What is a False Religion?

A false religion is any group calling themselves a **religion** which:
Does not believe that the One and Only, True God is Jesus Christ

For instance:

- Judaism
- Islam (Muslims)
- Confucianism
- Buddhism
- Etc.

Is There One Way to Witness to Anyone in any Cult or False Religion?

Yes, there is. Even though each cult or false religion has a different slant on untrue teachings, they all have one thing in common: they are depending on their own effort to be considered worthy to live eternally. In other words, they are working their way to heaven.

Your message to them, then, is simple:

There's nothing you can do to make yourself right with God.

- Talk about God, and what He is like – His Holiness, His love for mankind, His repugnance for sin, His awesome power, so great that He could make the whole world. There is no one like Him anywhere. There are no other Gods. (*Genesis 1:1*) (*Isaiah 46:9*)
- Then talk about sin and the different forms it takes, and what sin does to our ability to have a relationship with this Holy God. And what we deserve because we have sinned. (*Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23*)
- Then talk about the fact that there is no way for any person to “balance the scales” and somehow do enough good to make up for the bad. It won't work because even our “good” works are like filthy rags. We are bankrupt spiritually, and desperately need the One, True God to come to our rescue (*Isaiah 64:6*) (*Ephesians 2:8,9*) because there is an awful punishment waiting for us as a result of our sin.
- Then talk about the fact that Jesus is God, and the price He paid on the cross for us. He became our substitute – standing in our place and taking the punishment we deserved. (*Romans 5:8*) (*John 14:6*)

- Then talk about the proper response to realizing what Jesus did for us: saying thank you to Him for loving us so much, and offering our lives to Him in submission to whatever He wants. Faith. (*John 3:16*) (*John 1:12*)
- No one can, through their own effort or “goodness” ever be good enough to be in God’s presence. Only putting your faith in what God did on the cross will make you right with God.

What if...

What if I get confused? What if my friend gets angry? People involved in cults are trained to debate you out of your beliefs. And people involved in false religions will be very angry at you for being so sure Jesus is God.

Either way, simply keep your eyes focused on one goal: sharing the scriptures which are the foundations of truth in your life. And pray.

What if my friend doesn’t believe the Bible is true? If your friend puts up a roadblock by saying they don’t believe the Bible is true, that is not a problem.

Simply share the scriptures anyway. Not in a rude way...just ask if you can simply show why you believe what you believe. The scriptures are like a “sharp, two-edged sword” – and God will work in your friend’s heart with the truth he/she has heard, even though they don’t believe it is true. They don’t have to believe it is true before the truth begins to work on them. Pray.

What if someone asks a question I can’t answer? Ask for the time to research a little and get back with them. Make an appointment to continue the conversation. And pray.

What if someone kicks me out of their home...or out of their life...because they are so angry with me? Go lovingly and peacefully. And keep praying. Leave the door open for another day.

What if I can’t tell the whole story before my friend makes me stop? Follow up later with a letter, e-mail or phone call and try again. And pray.

What if my friend laughs at me...or tries to ruin my reputation with others? Actually, this is a good time to smile and say, “Wow – I’m being persecuted...I’m in good company! *“Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:12* And keep praying.

***Need a suggestion for your next Bible Study? How about
John Chapters 5-10 "Is Jesus Really God?"***

Was there a time in your life when you realized you were “religious”, but you didn’t know God? For me, it was when I was a senior in High School, in 1965. I had been raised in a religious home. We went to church fairly regularly. I had heard the story of Jesus, but I didn’t know God. I didn’t know Jesus. I didn’t understand that Jesus was actually God.

When I realized, for the first time in my life, that Jesus (God) had died for me – not just for everyone – but for me, I suddenly knew I was not the “good” Christian girl I had always thought I was. I was simply a sinner who needed a Savior. I bowed my head and thanked Jesus (God) for dying for me – and I told Him He could have my life – it wasn’t much in thanks for what He had done for me...but it was all I had.

I changed that day from a religious girl who didn’t know God to a very grateful girl who was just beginning a lifetime of getting to know Jesus Christ – The One, True God.

At the Pool of Bethesda, the blemished of mankind waited, hoping to be healed by God according to a legend. A man lay there who had been sick for a long, long time. Jesus asked him: Did he really want to get well? Jesus told him to pick up his bed and walk. It was against the Jewish law to carry furniture on the Sabbath. The Rabbis had decreed that this supposedly was work. But the true laws of God had been hidden away under the rules of men. Jesus was using His presence and His power to offer this man a choice: bow before your Messiah, or keep on “earning” your own salvation by following all of your own rules.

In the hallways of the Temple the most religious people of that time gathered and talked of God...but they really didn’t know Him at all. If they had known God, they would have recognized Jesus, because He was God!

On every street corner and grass-covered hill Jesus told people Who He was:

- The Bread of life.
- The Living Water.
- The One Who can forgive sin.
- The Light.
- The Son of God.
- The I AM.
- The Resurrection and the Life.
- The Way, the Truth and the Life.

Could there have been any doubt in anyone’s mind that He was saying “I AM GOD”???

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