

Inductive Bible Study the Gospel of John (ESV) Participants Guide

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Inductive Bible Study on the book of John

Participant Guide

Introduction to Inductive Bible Study

Opening Prayer

Father, we thank You for the freedom we have today to come together and study Your Word. We do not take this freedom for granted. Thank You for placing in us a desire and willingness to learn more about You and to grow in our understanding of salvation.

Lord, we are grateful that no matter our background, status, or walk of life, You have extended salvation to all through Your Son, Jesus Christ. As we study Your Word in the book of John open our eyes to see and our ears to hear what You are saying to us.

Holy Spirit, guide us in our observations, give us clarity in our questions, and reveal the truth of God's Word to us. Let this be more than just a study—make it a time of transformation. Let us walk away with deeper conviction, stronger faith, and renewed hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.

Why Use the Inductive Bible Study Method?

- It helps you grow spiritually by engaging with Scripture in a deeper, more personal way.
- It develops critical thinking and discernment as you study the Bible with context and accuracy.
- It strengthens your ability to apply biblical truth in everyday life.

The Gospel of John is one of the most theologically rich and spiritually profound books in the Bible. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—John’s account focuses less on chronology and more on unveiling the identity of Jesus as the eternal Son of God. From the opening declaration, “In the beginning was the Word,” John emphasizes that Jesus is not just a teacher or miracle worker, but the very expression of God in human flesh.

John’s purpose is clearly stated in John 20:31: “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” His Gospel is evangelistic, invitational, and deeply relational, portraying Jesus through signs, dialogues, and personal encounters that reveal His divine nature and mission.

This Gospel is filled with contrasts—light and darkness, belief and unbelief, life and death—and calls the reader into a decision: Will you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and will you receive the life He offers?

Through the inductive study of John, you will learn to observe the text carefully, ask meaningful questions, trace repeated words and themes, and respond to the Spirit’s leading. Whether Jesus is speaking to a religious leader in secret, a hurting woman at a well, or a crowd hungry for bread and truth, John shows us that Jesus meets people right where they are—with truth, grace, and eternal purpose.

It follows three main steps:

1. Observation – What does the text say?
 - Look closely at the passage and take note of key words, repeated phrases, contrasts, and themes.
 - Ask questions like: Who is speaking? What is happening? When and where is it taking place?
2. Interpretation – What does the text mean?
 - Consider the historical and cultural context of the passage.
 - Examine cross-references and explore how this passage connects with other Scriptures.
 - Seek to understand the author's original intent in writing the text.
3. Application – How does this apply to my life?
 - Reflect on how the passage challenges, convicts, or encourages personal growth and faith in Christ.
 - Ask: How does this truth change my understanding of God? How should I respond it helps you grow spiritually by engaging with Scripture in a deeper, more personal way.

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 - Ask: How does this truth change my understanding of God?
How should I respond?

Background on the Apostle John

Author: Who Was John?

John, the son of Zebedee, was one of Jesus' twelve disciples and is traditionally understood to be the author of this Gospel. He was a fisherman by trade, the brother of James, and a close companion of Jesus. He was known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" and later wrote the three epistles of John and the book of Revelation.

Traditional Accounts and Martyrdom

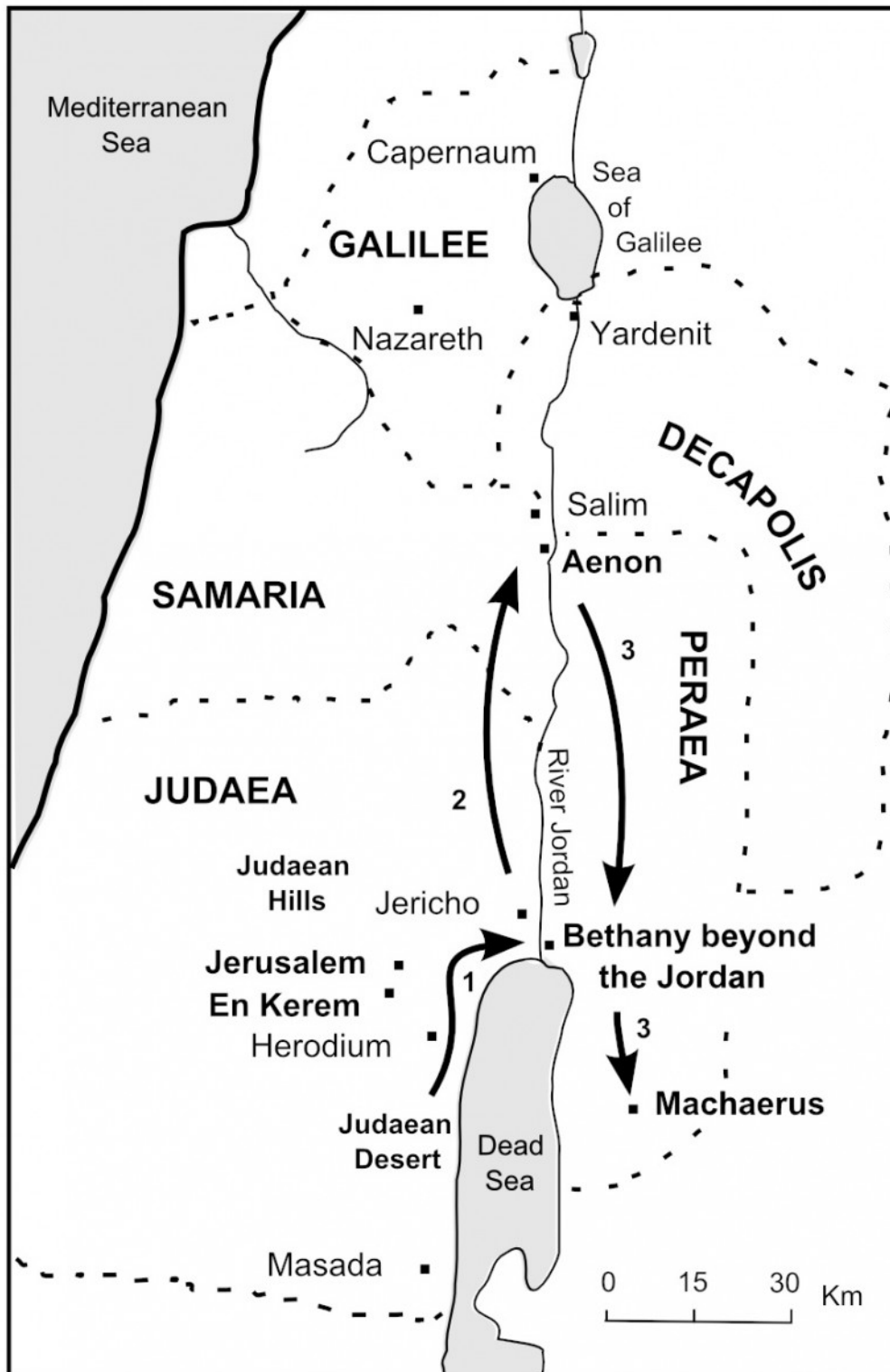
According to early Christian tradition, John lived a long life, unlike many of the other apostle who were martyred. He is believed to have died of natural causes, likely in Ephesus, where he led the church. Before his death, John was exiled on the island of Patmos under Roman persecution, where he received the visions that formed the Book of Revelation. His endurance and witness, even under persecution, solidified his legacy as a pillar of the early church.

Historical Context

The Gospel of John was likely written between AD 85-95, after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), John emphasizes Jesus' divinity and His unique relationship with the Father. The Gospel was written in a time when both Jewish and Gentile Christians faced persecution, and the church was expanding beyond Jewish communities into the broader Greco-Roman world.

Purpose of John's Gospel

John explicitly states his purpose in John 20:31: "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." His Gospel focuses on Jesus' identity as the Son of God and the importance of faith in Him for eternal life.



Key Locations in John 1 & 2

1. The Wilderness (John 1:23, 28)

- "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness..." – John the Baptist
- **Location:** Near **Bethany across the Jordan** (not the same as the Bethany near Jerusalem)
- **Significance:** A symbolic place of preparation and repentance. The wilderness connects to Old Testament prophetic imagery and signals spiritual readiness for the Messiah's arrival.

2. Bethany across the Jordan (John 1:28)

- Likely located east of the Jordan River.
- **Significance:** The site where John the Baptist was baptizing and where Jesus is first publicly introduced.
- This is where Jesus is called "*the Lamb of God*" and where the first disciples begin to follow Him.

3. Galilee (John 1:43; 2:1)

- Jesus decides to go to Galilee, where much of His early ministry takes place.
- **Significance:** A region looked down upon by many in Jerusalem, yet it becomes the starting point for discipleship and the first miracle.

4. Cana in Galilee (John 2:1–11)

- The site of Jesus' first miracle—**turning water into wine** at a wedding.
- **Significance:** A small, likely obscure town, showing Jesus' power and glory is revealed not in grand places but in humble settings.
- This "first sign" points to the abundance and transformation Jesus brings.

5. Capernaum (John 2:12)

- Jesus, His family, and disciples go to **Capernaum** briefly after the wedding.
- **Significance:** Becomes a central hub for Jesus' teaching and healing ministry in Galilee.

6. Jerusalem – The Temple (John 2:13–25)

- Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the **Passover** and finds the Temple filled with merchants and money changers.
- **Significance:** This is where He **cleanses the Temple**, demonstrating His **zeal for true worship** and symbolically foreshadowing His **death and resurrection** (the “temple” of His body).

John 1

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 was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might

believe through him. He was not the light but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") For from his fullness, we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) They asked him, "Then

why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. "These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me. 'I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So, they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own

brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter. The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

John 2

On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his

disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So, they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days. The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered

that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Participant Guide – Inductive Bible Study on John 1 & 2

Week 1 – Introduction to the Gospel of John

Scripture Focus: John 20:30–31; Gospel Background

Theme: Purpose and Authorship of the Gospel

Observation & Questions

- Who is the author and what is his purpose?
- What do we learn about the audience?
- What key words or phrases are introduced?

Your Observations:

Your Questions:

Week 2 – John 1:1–18 – The Word Became Flesh

Scripture Focus: John 1:1–18

Theme: Jesus as the Eternal Word and Light

Observation & Questions

- What titles are given to Jesus?
- What contrasts are used (light/dark, receive/reject)?
- What truths are revealed about Jesus' identity?

Your Observations:

Your Questions:

Week 3 – John 1:19–34 – The Witness of John the Baptist

Scripture Focus: John 1:19–34

Theme: Testimony and Identity

Observation & Questions

- Who is John the Baptist, and how does he describe himself?
- What is John's mission?
- What is revealed about Jesus?

Your Observations:

Your Questions:

Week 4 – John 1:35–51 – The First Disciples

Scripture Focus: John 1:35–51

Theme: Invitation to Follow

Observation & Questions

- What phrases are repeated (e.g., "Come and see")?
- How do the disciples describe Jesus?
- What motivates them to follow?

Your Observations:

Your Questions:

Week 5 – John 2:1–12 – Water into Wine

Scripture Focus: John 2:1–12

Theme: Jesus' First Sign and Transformation

Observation & Questions

- What role does Mary play?
- How does Jesus respond?
- What is the significance of the water and wine?

Your Observations:

Your Questions:

Week 6 – John 2:13–25 – Cleansing the Temple

Scripture Focus: John 2:13–25

Theme: True Worship and Jesus' Authority

Observation & Questions

- What does Jesus do in the temple?
- Why are His actions controversial?
- What sign does He give about His authority?

Your Observations:

Your Questions:

Reflection, Application & Prayer – John 1 & 2

Week 1 – Introduction to the Gospel of John

Reflection:

- What excites or challenges you about studying this, Gospel?
- Why is it important that John’s purpose was “so that you may believe”?

Application:

- Set a spiritual goal for this 6-week study. What do you hope God reveals to you?

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the Gospel of John and the gift of Scripture. Prepare our hearts and minds to receive Your truth. Help us believe more deeply in who Jesus is and grow in our relationship with Him. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Week 2 – John 1:1–18 – The Word Became Flesh

Reflection:

- What stands out to you about the identity of Jesus as the Word and the Light?
- How does the phrase “full of grace and truth” speak to your understanding of God?

Application:

- Meditate on John 1:14 this week. Consider how Jesus brings truth and grace to your everyday situations.

Prayer:

Jesus, You are the Word made flesh. Help me receive You fully and walk in Your light. Let Your grace and truth transform how I see myself, others, and the world. Amen.

Week 3 – John 1:19–34 – The Witness of John the Baptist

Reflection:

- What can we learn from John the Baptist’s boldness and humility?

- How is God calling you to point others to Jesus?

Application:

- Write a short testimony this week that reflects what Jesus has done in your life.

Prayer:

Lord, make me a faithful witness like John the Baptist. Teach me to decrease so You may increase in every part of my life. Use my story to draw others to You. Amen.

Week 4 – John 1:35–51 – The First Disciples

Reflection:

- Which disciple's response to Jesus speaks most to you? Why?
- How are you responding to Jesus' invitation to "Come and see"?

Application:

- Invite someone to "come and see" what Jesus is doing—through your life, your church, or your story.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank You for calling me to follow You. Open my eyes to see who You are more clearly and give me boldness to invite others into that journey with me. Amen.

Week 5 – John 2:1–12 – Water into Wine

Reflection:

- What does this miracle reveal about Jesus' character and timing?
- How has Jesus brought transformation in your life?

Application:

- Identify an area in your life where you need Jesus to "fill the jars"—to bring spiritual renewal.

Prayer:

Lord, thank You for showing that You care about the details of our lives.

Transform me by Your presence. Let Your abundance overflow into every dry or empty place in my heart. Amen.

Week 6 – John 2:13–25 – Cleansing the Temple

Reflection:

- What area of your heart needs cleansing or reordering in this season?
- How do you understand true worship in light of this passage?

Application:

- Make space this week for “temple cleansing”—removing distractions that hinder your worship.

Prayer:

Father, purify my heart. Remove anything in me that is out of alignment with Your will. Restore in me a heart that worships You in spirit and in truth. In Jesus' name, amen.
