

**Gospel of John Study Calendar** – With notes written by Gail O’Day excerpted and paraphrased from *The New Interpreter’s Study Bible* (Abingdon Press, 2003)

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 1: For John, the beginning of the story is not the birth of Jesus (Matthew, Luke) nor his baptism (Mark). Here we have a cosmic Christ that has existed eternally with God. For Christians, the “word of God” doesn’t only refer to printed scripture, but to Jesus as the <i>living</i> word of God.</p> <p>The first disciples called are Philip and Nathanael, before Jesus’ ministry has really even begun.</p> <p>Note: Throughout John, images of darkness and light will be used for <i>unbelief/faith</i> and <i>evil/good</i>. Watch which events happen in daylight and which occur at night!</p> <p>Note: “Lamb of God” is used for the very first time in v. 29. These are John the Baptist’s words for Jesus. Do not confuse John the Baptist with John the evangelist (the author). There are several Johns!</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 2: Jesus’ first miracle. Miracles are “signs” because they are intended to demonstrate the truth of Jesus’ lordship and bring us to faith. In each miracle look for the <i>setting</i> (v. 1-2), the <i>need</i> (3-5), the <i>miracle</i> (6-8), and <i>witnesses</i> (9-11).</p> <p>Jesus cleanses the temple (v. 13) during the festival of Passover, in early spring. All other Gospels have the cleansing of the temple at the very end of his life. Only John describes a three-year ministry for Jesus, who attended Passover again the following year (6.1) and before his trial (13.1).</p> <p><i>The Third day</i> begins at 2.1. John divides his early chapters into a series of days very similar to the creation account in Genesis 1. There is a time before time (1.1-18); a day for John’s witness (1.19-34); a day on which the disciples are called (1.35-51), and a day for the <i>first sign</i> (2.1-12). These are probably phases, not literal days.</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 3: Nicodemus meets Jesus “at night” – secretly. Darkness is also a symbol of unbelief in John (Compare to chapter 1 – “the true light was coming into the world”).</p> <p>Key terms: <i>Pharisee</i> – a teacher of the law and a member of the Jewish religious leadership.</p> <p><i>The Jews</i> – for John this term sometimes refers to the entire Jewish community or common people (4.22; 11.19), but more often refers to the leaders, or ruling religious elite (1.19; 5.16; 9.22-23). By the time John’s Gospel was written down, followers of Jesus had been kicked out of the synagogue, and the hurt and anger of these events are evident in John’s very strong anti-Jewish language. Christians are no longer a persecuted minority and should not continue to perpetrate these negative attitudes toward Jews.</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 4: The woman from Samaria meets Jesus at noon, which tells us she is an outcast in her village. Since Samaritans are considered outcasts of the Jews, she is an “outcast among outcasts” – yet she is the very first person to acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah! And many other Samaritans also believed (4.39) – long before Jesus’ own people.</p> <p>Note: Only in John does Jesus refer to himself using the expression “I am.” Often a noun follows, as in “I am the bread of life,” or “I am the light of the world.” There are over a dozen such expressions. (How many can you find?) At 4.26 and seven other times, Jesus simply says “I am.” When Jesus speaks this way, he is making a direct connection with the divine name (as in Exodus 3:14, “<i>I AM WHO I AM</i>”) in order to identify himself as the one in whom God is visible and made known.</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 5: Remember to watch for the four parts of this controversial miracle story – <i>setting, need, miracle, and witnesses</i>. This miracle and most others in John will be followed by a great deal of controversy and argument, especially with religious leaders. In this case, the controversy begins because the healing occurs on the Sabbath. And what’s worse – Jesus refers to God as his own Father (v. 17), which was treated as blasphemy.</p> <p>This chapter ends with Jesus giving an extended teaching about his authority from God (5:19-47).</p> <p>Jesus describes himself as (vs. 21-22) exercising two powers which normally would be understood as belonging only to God: he gives life (compare to 1 Samuel 2.6; 2 Kings 5:7; Ezekiel 37.3-12). He also pronounces judgment (compare to Psalm 43:1; Psalm 109).</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 6: This entire chapter will be an extended series of events through which Jesus is described as “the bread of life.” After feeding a huge crowd, he is seen walking on water (only God can control the waters, right? And who does he tell them he is? See v. 20 and notes from Ch. 4) Compare the bread that Jesus gives with the “living water” of Ch. 4. Only Jesus provides these gifts of heavenly, eternal sustenance.</p> <p>Key term: <i>Eternal Life</i> does not describe our future life in heaven or spiritual immortality. It is a quality of life that is possible now when we live by faith in the unending presence of God.</p> <p>Note: This chapter is the closest John comes to describing the sacrament of Holy Communion. In all other Gospels, Jesus teaches that rite at the last supper. In John he washes their feet instead.</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 7: The world is more and more divided as Jesus’ story continues. First he argues with his disciples, who are upset because he won’t assert his power more openly. Then we hear a variety of comments from the crowd, and even more diversity of reactions when he begins teaching. Temple officers are sent to actually arrest him for the first time (v. 32), showing their increasing fear and consternation. Jesus seems to be very popular among many, but even most of those who favor him do not know what to think of his real identity (vs. 40-44).</p> <p>Key term: <i>Festival of Booths</i>, also called <i>tabernacles</i>, is a fall harvest festival associated with the exodus from Egypt.</p> <p>Note: Verse 5 is one of the few references to Jesus’ family.</p> <p>Note: Nicodemus, from Ch. 3, comes back here in vs. 50-52.</p>
<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 8: This section may be marked in brackets in your study Bible because it does not exist in many of the oldest manuscripts of the Gospel. Some scholars note that the story seems to fit better with the kinds of tricky questions and tests Jesus has to put up with so often in the other Gospels. As in those other stories, Jesus doesn’t fall for the trap. Is he writing words in the dirt? Maybe –or perhaps he is just ignoring them.</p> <p>Note: The Scribes and Pharisees have not provided any witnesses to the woman’s crime, which is a violation of their own law. And where is the accused man? He should also be subject to a death penalty since they were both “caught in the act.”</p> <p>Key term: “You are going to die in your <i>sin</i>.” This does not refer to wrong actions, but their failure to comprehend the divinity of Jesus.</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 9: Remember how <i>darkness</i> refers to unbelief and <i>light</i> refers to faith? Who could be more in the dark than a man born blind? And yet he comes to have complete faith in Jesus! Who should be more “enlightened” than these religious leaders? And yet they are the ones who are “blind” to reality. The worst blindness is not physical, but spiritual. The blind man is redeemed, but the religious will be condemned for their failure to see.</p> <p>Note: Verse 25 is the basis for the first verse of <i>Amazing Grace</i>.</p> <p>Note: It is assumed that a man born blind must be paying for his own sin or sins of his ancestors (v. 34). Jesus denies this explanation.</p> <p>Key term: <i>Give glory to God!</i> is an expression not unlike taking an oath in our courts. The authorities are commanding the healed man to give true testimony.</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 10: This section may be best understood as a further teaching, continuing directly on from the end of Ch. 9. Here the contrast is not blindness/sight, but the ability to recognize the appropriate leader/shepherd (Jesus) and to move in response to his voice or direction. In vs. 7-8 we see that Jesus not only provides guidance, but truly cares for all of the needs of the sheep in a way that no “hired hand” or imposter could. This is an image of what abundant life in Christ should be like – secure and directed by our Shepherd/Lord, who is entirely trustworthy and committed to our good. Rejection of Jesus continues (v. 31) as the second yearly cycle ends.</p> <p>Key term: In Ezekiel 34, wicked kings of Israel are depicted as <i>bad shepherds</i> who endanger the flock. Jesus draws on this tradition when he contrasts himself as a <i>good shepherd</i>.</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 11: In every Gospel there is an account of Jesus raising someone from the dead. Only in John, however, do we have this account of Lazarus, who was the brother of Mary and Martha in Bethany. Jesus’ refusal to leave when told of the illness is alarming, but remember this is not the only time he has refused to act on the timetable of disciples or family (2.4; 7.9-10).</p> <p>Key term: As the <i>resurrection and the life</i> (v. 25), Jesus defeats the power of death in the future (“even though they die, will live” - 25b) and also in the present (they “will never die” - vs. 26a).</p> <p>Note: Lazarus is still bound by burial cloths and must be unwrapped. Jesus will require no such assistance as he leaves his grave clothes behind. His resurrection is a categorically different experience.</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 12: Both the quality and quantity of the perfume are noted because they are remarkable. The use of her hair as a wiping cloth is also startlingly intimate. Mary’s act is one of true love, similar in tone and generosity to Jesus’ future act of love in washing the disciples’ feet. Judas is a stark contrast – the betrayer does not understand the value of her gift, and challenges it. Jesus defends her and validates her actions, putting Judas in his place. Jesus is depicted as being completely aware of the needs, plots, and motivations around him. He also has divine control over his responses to these events, despite the occasions for severe fatigue, stress, and fear.</p> <p>Note: While many Jews continue to reject Jesus, now even Greeks are seeking him out. This indicates the eventual spread of the Gospel to gentile peoples.</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 13: We have come to the final feast of Passover, and Jesus acts out a drama in which he performs the work of household slaves. Again he demonstrates his love for those who follow him, and his expectation for us to live as servants of one another.</p> <p>Note: The chronology of Jesus’ last days differs from that in the other Gospels. All agree that the trial and crucifixion took place on Thursday evening/Friday morning, but they disagree on the timing of Passover. In John, the disciples share the Passover meal with Jesus. In John, this meal occurs on the evening <i>before</i> Passover begins. In this way, Jesus dies at the beginning of Passover, right as the lambs would have been slaughtered. That is, he is symbolically taking their place as “the lamb of God.”</p>	<p><b>Date</b></p> <p>Chapter 14: This chapter begins John’s longest discourse. From here through Ch. 17, Jesus will give final teachings and instructions to the disciples in preparation for his “departure” or death.</p> <p>Key term: The <i>dwelling place</i> that Jesus describes (vs. 2-3) is usually understood as our heavenly home. But to “dwell with God” is to live in relationship with God through Jesus – at any time or place. In this discourse, Jesus promises that his departure will open up entirely new opportunities for us to relate to God.</p> <p>Key term: <i>Parakletos</i>, which is Greek for <i>advocate, comforter, counselor, or helper</i> is first described here (v.16). This force, which will <i>abide</i> with the faithful but not with the <i>world</i> is our continual means of connection to God, even providing direct teaching in Jesus’ absence.</p>

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<p>Chapter 15: <i>Abide or remain</i> expresses the central theme of this chapter (vs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 16). Jesus is the true vine; God is the vine-grower; we are the branches. Our fruitfulness depends on our continual connection with Jesus, and with God as our source. This is a profoundly intimate, close, and continuing relationship, entirely in contrast with most ancient religions. The Father as described by Jesus is a tender caregiver, and our very life flows out of Jesus’ own life.</p> <p>Note: Beginning in v. 18, Jesus instructs the disciples on expecting controversy and animosity from <i>the world</i>. We are reminded again of how much the community had already suffered before this Gospel was committed to writing in the early 90’s CE.</p>	<p>Chapter 16: Jesus’ teaching goes on at length, while we see the disciples struggling to understand his meanings (vs.16-19). Only after his death, resurrection and ascension will they begin to comprehend most of these realities. The Gospel writer notes this problem also at 2.22 and 12.16. But remember - you and I are living after all of these events have occurred, so we have the full revelation of Jesus. We therefore have no excuses for not comprehending the Lordship of Jesus or committing our lives to him. This total commitment of faith – no sitting on the sidelines – is a key feature of John that cannot be avoided.</p> <p>Key terms: <i>Love</i> in this Gospel means sharing fully in the presence of works of Jesus. <i>Hate</i> is living apart from the presence and works of Jesus.</p>	<p>Chapter 17: This prayer of Jesus is the very last part of his final meal. Until now, he has been talking to them; now he is speaking to God on their behalf. The prayer is two-sided, though. Jesus is aware of the disciples’ listening to him, and so he says things also “for their benefit.”</p> <p>Key term: <i>The world</i> does not refer to all of creation, but specifically to those who do not know God. (See also 1.10-11; 7:7; 12:31; 15:18-19; 16:8-11.) Jesus prays for our protection from <i>the evil one</i> as we are in <i>the world</i>. This implies that Christians will not be removed from persecution or opposition, but we can anticipate support for our faith through times of difficulty or struggle.</p> <p>Jesus’ prayer for unity and oneness (17.21) is grounded in the unity of Jesus and the Father. The community is <i>one</i> because they share together in the relationship of God and Jesus. This theme continues through v. 26.</p>	<p>Chapter 18: This is the <i>hour</i> that Jesus has been referring to throughout the Gospel – the time of his betrayal, arrest, trial, and death. Through these events he will be “lifted up” – shamefully on the cross. Ironically, this is actually how his true glory will be revealed.</p> <p>The trial is structured like a drama, in seven separate scenes. Every time you see Pilate move in or out of his headquarters, a new section is beginning (18.29, 33, 38b, 19.1, 4, 9, 13).</p> <p>The world tries to put Jesus on trial, but Jesus is shown to be the true judge. The trial will also show that Jesus is not king according to the world’s conventional expectations (6:14-15; 12:13), but is truly king of heaven and earth.</p> <p>Note: The Jewish religious leaders had authority on their own to stone Jesus (to death) for blasphemy. They could not, however, have him crucified without a Roman conviction. They take Jesus to Pilate for this reason.</p>	<p>Chapter 19: Jesus is in complete control of himself and of the circumstances (v. 10-11) throughout his trial.</p> <p>Crucifixion was considered such a degrading and horrible form of punishment that it was fit only for slaves and the worst offenders, those guilty of treason and sedition. Unlike the other Gospels, only the religious leaders, and not the full crowd, call for death by crucifixion.</p> <p>Breaking the legs of one being crucified made it impossible for him to hold himself up to breathe, thus hastening death. The piercing of Jesus body demonstrated that he was actually a physical being, and that he had really died. The water and blood may be symbols, also, of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.</p> <p>Note: Jesus bones are not broken (v. 36). Neither were the bones of Passover lambs broken.</p> <p>Note: Nicodemus returns to the story for the final time.</p>	<p>Chapter 20: The women are the first to find the empty tomb, John is the first to believe Jesus has been raised from the dead, and Mary Magdalene is the first one to see him in the flesh.</p> <p>Thomas is called “doubting,” which may not be quite fair. He wasn’t there when Jesus first arrived, after all. He doesn’t see the Lord for an entire week, either. The point isn’t that there is something wrong with Thomas, but that the rest of us are going to have to believe in exactly the conditions Thomas said he couldn’t accept. We don’t get to see Jesus with physical eyes. We do not touch his wounds. And yet, with all of the testimony given in the Gospel, we are still expected to have faith in him. Those who believe as <i>you</i> do are blessed, Jesus says.</p> <p>Note: Chapters 20 and 21 will contain many accounts of Jesus resurrected life in which promises made during the “farewell discourse” of Chs. 14-17 will be kept. Can you track some of these?</p>	<p>Chapter 21: Chapter 21 is something like an epilogue for the Gospel. If you read the end of 20 carefully, you can see how this might have been the original ending. These further accounts give a further witness to Jesus’ resurrected life, including the important detail that he ate real food with the disciples – so he’s not a ghost!</p> <p>Note: Peter denied Jesus three times, and was devastated by his “failure.” Here Jesus gives Peter three new opportunities to affirm his commitment, thus rebuilding his broken sense of self.</p> <p>The last lines here are so poignant – “I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written!” Because Jesus is <i>the word of God</i> no book of words can ever contain him or his actions. On the other hand, you and I and every one of the faithful are also supposed to be witnesses for him, even perhaps writing our own accounts of his continuing life among us.</p>

Got a question? A good thought? E-mail Pastor Ruth Ann at raramstad@wumc-pgumc.org! A response will be posted on www.wumc-pgumc.org Check it out!