

## Sometimes the best evangelist is a Bible and a small group.

Picture a small group of seeking friends, from where you live, work, or play, reading and discussing the Bible together. This group is not a class or a lecture but a safe place for people to encounter the Savior through the Scriptures. How do you launch such a group?

You need a “quick start” to get this group going. Within this leader’s guide is all the information you need to begin a Bible reading group. You will learn how to:

- create a setting for discussion and discovery.
- become a discovery-leader rather than a lecturer.
- recruit seeking friends.
- organize an evening’s discussion using the Gospel of John.

This QuickStart approach provides over 200 time-tested questions about the Gospel of John that you can immediately use in your group. After all, sometimes the best evangelist is a Bible and a small group.

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BILL MOWRY



# A QuickStart

for Small Group Evangelism

A Leader’s Guide

**Sometimes the best evangelist is a Bible and a small group.**

A QuickStart with the Gospel of John

This ministry resource was crafted by Bill Mowry.

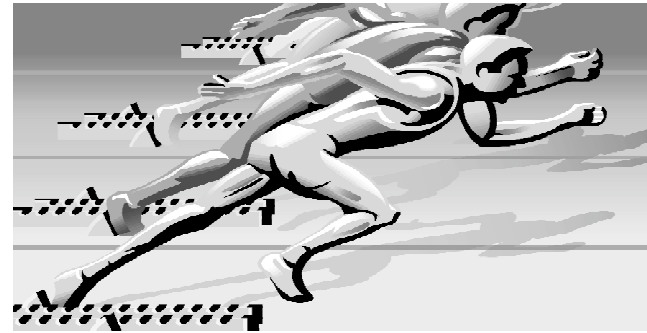
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- **Involve people in interpretation.** Help people discover the passage's meaning by asking: "What do you think the author means....?" or "Why do you think the author said it in this way?"
- **Ask emotional questions.** Emotional questions help people respond from the heart and not just the head. Here's an example: "How do you feel about what Jesus said?"
- **Don't react to "off-the-wall" answers.** Any time you involve people in reading the Bible for the first-time, you will have some off-the wall answers that are irrelevant to the text or could be doctrinally wrong. While you don't want the group to reach wrong conclusions, don't spend a lot of time correcting people. Point out that this could be one way of looking at the text and move on. If people stay in the Scriptures long enough, the questions you ask can guide them in making informed discoveries. When you ask good questions, you're training people to wisely interpret the Scriptures.
- **Provide periodic summaries and encourage application.** Pause occasionally to discuss your findings: "It sounds like we've discovered....." Gently challenge people to respond to their discoveries. Here's a simple application question: "How could this insight make a difference in our lives today?"

You're now ready to get started. If you're reading together the Gospel of John, the center pages of this booklet provide dozens of questions. You will also find an enclosed CD with a folder of the same questions. Print as many copies as you need for each discussion. Each member should have a set of questions.



# A QuickStart

## for Small Group Evangelism

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### A Leader's Guide

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## Welcome.

You have in your hands all the information needed to “quick start” a small group approach to evangelism. This **QuickStart Leader’s Guide** outlines the steps needed to begin a Bible reading group using the Gospel of John with spiritually seeking friends.

This Leader’s Guide can be used individually or with a small group. Sprinkled throughout the text are small assignments marked with a ▼. Your quick start will be enhanced when you complete these assignments.

## A New Approach to Evangelism.

Steve didn’t realize how nervous he was. He had prayed about the decision but there was still an edge of anxiety in his voice. He was about to extend to Doug, his unchurched friend, a provocative invitation.

**Steve:** “Peg and I have been talking about inviting some friends to read the Bible with us. As we thought about who to invite, you came to mind. This isn’t a study group but an informal discussion to discover what the Gospel of John says about Jesus.”

**Doug:** “You know, Steve, I’m ashamed to tell you this, but I’ve never read the Bible. I don’t know what I could contribute to a study.”

**Steve:** “Remember Doug, this isn’t a study but a discussion. I’m pretty familiar with the Bible, but friends like you bring a fresh perspective to my understanding. Why don’t you think about it and I’ll get back with you about the details.”

Is reading the Bible with unbelieving friends doing evangelism? You bet it is! Inviting friends to read the Scriptures is a powerful way for people to understand and experience Jesus firsthand. Whether it’s done one-on-one or with a small group, reading the Bible makes Jesus up-close and personal.

## Why Start a Bible Reading Group?

Religious surveys tell us that unchurched people are hesitant about attending a worship service. However, people are curious about Jesus. A Bible reading group captures this curiosity about the Savior. Instead of asking friends to come to church, we meet people in their homes, offices, or at a local restaurant. Like Jesus, we go to

## How Do I Lead a Good Discussion?

Jesus often exasperated His followers and critics by refusing to give packaged answers to their questions. Instead, he would respond with a penetrating question (Luke 14:3-6), an ambiguous metaphor (John 4:3-5), or a captivating story (Matthew 18:21ff). Jesus intentionally engaged people in the process of discovery, reflection, and application.

A discussion calls for conversation and dialogue. Understanding occurs as people interact with the Scriptures together. *QuickStart* provides questions that have survived the rough-and-tumble of numerous discussion groups. Here are some additional suggestions about launching and leading a discussion.

- **Do your homework.** The discussion group leader needs to be familiar with the chapter under discussion. Read the passage several times. Use a commentary to help you understand the difficult passages. Be familiar with the main ideas or themes of the chapter.
- **Provide each group member with a copy of the Gospel of John.** It’s preferable that everyone use the same translation. Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the passage to be discussed. Some people feel uncomfortable reading out loud. Always ask for volunteers.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Instead of asking, “What are the three points of this passage?” ask instead, “What can we observe from this passage?” If any question can be answered by a “yes” or “no” then it is not an open-ended question. You have with this booklet a resource of time-tested questions to use.
- **Emphasize observation.** Ask people to observe events, people, ideas, or central truths. Get people looking at the text before asking them to interpret the text. “What do you observe?” should proceed “What does it mean?”
- **Listen to people and provide affirmation.** After listening, ask additional questions for clarity and understanding. For example, “Could you describe what you mean by...?” or “What I hear you saying is...” Make your affirmation genuine. People know when remarks are “canned.”

**5. Invite people.** Remember how Steve approached Doug on page 5. Let your friend know that you're thinking about starting a group. Follow up a few days later with a specific invitation. Your invitation should emphasize:

- This is a reading group and not a study group.
- The group is for people who are investigating the Christian faith and is open to skeptics and inquirers.
- The group will meet for a short duration and then people can decide if they want to continue.
- It is a discussion format that allows everyone to share their observations.
- The group will focus on one of the biographies (Gospels) of Jesus. It is sometimes helpful to “script” what you are going to say so that you will not be so nervous. Write out a one-two sentence script to use in inviting your friends.

**6. Pick a place to read.** The Gospel of John is an excellent place to begin a discussion. John's stated purpose is to write a narrative so that people would believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 20:31).

**7. Select a comfortable place to meet.** If your group is composed of friends and neighbors, a home is an excellent meeting place. If your group consists of coworkers, find a comfortable meeting or conference room at your workplace. Our meeting place will be:

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where people live, work, or play.

**Why just the Bible?** People can experience God firsthand through the Scriptures. A Bible reading group allows “God to do the talking” because the Scriptures bear witness to Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44-47). When Philip read the scroll of Isaiah with the Ethiopian official, he literally “evangelized to him Jesus” (Acts 8:35).

**Why a small group?** People desire a sense of community. A small group allows truth to be discovered and discussed in the safety of relationships. Discussion, rather than telling, encourages understanding, which is the key to conversion (Matthew 13:23).

- ▼ What are some other reasons for the effectiveness of a Bible reading group?

## What Is a Bible Reading Group?

A Bible reading group is a dynamic alternative to traditional evangelistic approaches. It is best described by what it is not.

- **It is not a Christian discipleship course.** While believers need to read and discuss the Bible, the purpose of this group is for spiritual seekers to discover Jesus.
- **It is not a Bible study.** Seeking people prefer the informality of a discussion rather than the perceived academic formality of a “study.”
- **It is not a teaching time.** Discussion means dialogue, conversation, and the sharing of insights. A Bible reading group is not the traditional setting where a teacher instructs students.
- **It is not a time for “closing the deal.”** While conversion is a desired goal, the explicit goal of the reading group is to help people take steps towards believing and following the Savior.

A Bible reading group is a safe place where people can ask honest questions and make firsthand discoveries about Christ in the Scriptures. The goal is to help people understand the Bible and move them step-by-step to follow Jesus. Seeking friends need room and safety to doubt, to question, and to weigh the cost of their decision for Christ.

- ▼ Review the above description. How is a Bible reading group different from traditional classes or evangelistic settings?

## What Does a Bible Reading Group Look Like?

Jim and Nancy, and Angie and Jack, have been discussing the Bible with their friends and neighbors for several months. These two couples are the only Christ-followers in a group of twelve people. When you join Angie and Jack's group in their living room, several things stand out.

- The setting is casual and friendly. Coffee, soft drinks, and dessert are available. Before the discussion begins, people talk and get caught up with each other's lives. Chairs are arranged in a circle in the living room and there is no podium or blackboard in sight.
- After about 15 minutes, Jack gathers people together. To ensure that everyone is reading from the same translation, paperback copies of John's Gospel are made available. Several in this group have never read a Bible. The verse numbers and multiple authors (weren't John and Paul members of The Beatles?) are initially confusing.
- Jack begins the conversation with this statement, "Thanks for coming. For those who are visiting for the first time, this is an open discussion about Jesus Christ. We're using the best source we have for His life, one of the biographies about Jesus in the New Testament. Our goal is to see what the Bible says about Jesus Christ. Whether you believe what we discover is up to you. Feel free to ask any question or express any thought you may have about the chapter under discussion. I will ask some questions to launch the discussion. Remember, our goal is to try to make sense out of this biography's description of Jesus."

Friends in the social, personal, or spiritual categories are prime candidates to invite to a Bible reading group. If you don't have any friends like these, ask God to bring them into your life.

## What Steps Do I Need to Take to Get Started?

**1. Team with others.** Pray for two or three Christian friends to help sponsor a discussion group. Not everyone is a good discussion group leader. Some are people-gatherers and others have the gift of hospitality. Make evangelism a team effort, using the differing gifts and strengths of the members. List some potential team members.

**2. Pray as a team.** After you've gathered your team together, schedule a time to pray. Covenant together to ask God to lead you to people who would be willing to read the Bible with you. This shouldn't be a one-time prayer session; plan several times of concerted prayer before you begin inviting people.

**3. Develop a plan.** Set a date to begin your group. Some groups meet once a month; other groups start out as a 3-4 week series. Your plan should include:

- number of times you will meet \_\_\_\_\_
- where you will meet \_\_\_\_\_
- when you will meet \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Decide who to invite.** A Bible reading group may not be for everyone. In a person's journey toward Jesus, there's often a process of moving from interest to insight to conviction. Interest is ignited by the attractive life of a believer. Insight is gained through discussion and discovery (the goal of a Bible reading group). Conviction often comes from an explanation of the gospel and the gentle persuasion to follow Christ. A Bible reading group is for those who are interested but need insight and conviction. This is why discovery and discussion are emphasized.

you could invite to your home, out to dinner, to see a movie, or attend a concert with?

**Step #4: Personal.** Personal relationships occur when you share life together, with all of its ups and downs. There is a mutual transparency and vulnerability as you discuss your dreams, disappointments, hopes, or fears. Who in your social circle, could you go deeper with?

**Step #5: Spiritual.** Spiritual relationships form when we share our faith together. There is enough safety and trust to talk openly about God, Jesus, faith, and the Bible. Who can you naturally talk with about spiritual issues?

<sup>1</sup>The following tips were adapted from the ministry resource, *Making Friends for Heaven's Sake*. You can find out more about *Making Friends* material at [www.makingfriends.info](http://www.makingfriends.info)

- Jack passes out copies of the questions for tonight's discussion. Since everyone has the same set of questions, there's no hidden agenda for the meeting.
  - In the discussion, you notice that the Christians do not use Christian jargon, words familiar to them but which carry little meaning to their unbelieving friends. Words such as "salvation," "sin," "righteousness," and "born again," have found substitutes.
  - As the leader, Jack asks questions and listens rather than giving answers. He openly shares his spiritual life as a fellow traveler rather than someone who has the answers. He asks people to clarify their discoveries rather than correcting them. You notice that his eyebrows don't go up when a seeking friend shares an outrageous conclusion or uses profanity. Jack doesn't expect regenerate behavior from unregenerate people.
  - When the discussion breaks up, the believers do not gather comfortably among themselves. They scatter to follow-up on conversations with their seeking friends.
  - A debriefing time is held in Angie and Jack's kitchen when everyone leaves. You discover that several unbelieving friends are experiencing spiritual growth. Resistance to talking about God and the Bible has been overcome. Views about Jesus have changed. Two friends have made professions of faith. The couples assure you that evangelism is more often a journey than an event.
- ▼ From this description, what stands out to you about how to lead a Bible reading group?

## What Do I Need To Know To Be an Effective Leader?

The leadership of a Bible reading group with unbelieving friends is not like a traditional classroom or a discipleship group. Here are some differences.

- The leader is just one member of a team. He or she may be good at leading a discussion but recruiting people or creating a

hospitable atmosphere may be others' strengths.

- The leader is a learner among learners. There is always more to learn about Christ and sometimes our unbelieving friends provide the greatest insights.
  - The leader is prepared for the discussion but doesn't let it show. He or she has done their homework and is familiar with the passage.
  - A leader knows that the goal is not to win an argument but to help people explore the Scriptures.
  - A leader is more interested in people expressing their own thoughts than sharing his or her own opinions. This means that listening is crucial and questions are welcomed.
  - A leader keeps the discussion on track yet isn't afraid of silence. People need time and space to think, so silence is ok.
- ▼ As a future leader, which of these principles are most comfortable for you? Which ones could be difficult for you to apply?

## What's the Most Important Prerequisite for a Good Discussion?

What's the most important prerequisite for a Bible reading group? Having friends! This seems so obvious but it's often a neglected part of the process. Effective Bible reading groups do not form by posting notices on office bulletin boards or canvassing your neighborhoods. People will attend because they feel safe with you. This safety allows them to pursue their curiosity about Jesus and the Bible in your group.

Before beginning a group, you may need to spend some time cultivating healthy relationships. Some people have an ever-growing network of unbelieving or seeking friends. Others need some help in developing this network. Here are some common social networks to invite people from:

- neighbors
- coworkers
- family and relatives
- parents of children's friends
- members of social groups or hobby groups
- high school or college friends
- other ideas:

If you do not have quality relationships from which to invite friends, select one of the above groups and begin asking God to give you some friendships within the group. What action steps do you need to take? Consider the following process of moving acquaintances to spiritual friends.<sup>1</sup>

**Step #1: Next-to.** Next-to relationships are the acquaintances you work next-to, live next-to, or sit next-to at a child's sporting event. Simple introductions are exchanged in next-to relationships. What next-to relationships can you initiate?

**Step #2: Casual.** Casual relationships are people with whom you've exchanged some basic information. You know whether he or she is married, their number of children, where they live, their hobbies, employment, etc. Who is a casual acquaintance that you can begin to gather information about?

**Step #3: Social.** Social relationships are built around a mutual chemistry together. You enjoy one another's company and have discovered some common interests. These could include hobbies, eating out, movies, concerts, sporting events, etc. Who is someone





## Additional comments and notes:

You're now ready to get started. If you're reading together the Gospel of John, the center pages of this booklet provide dozens of questions. You will also find an enclosed CD with a folder of the same questions. Print as many copies as you need for each discussion. Each member should have a set of questions.

## Encountering Jesus in the Gospel of John.

You're about to embark on a journey of discovery in one of the four historical narratives, or Gospels, about the life of Jesus Christ. The word "gospel" in the original Greek language meant "good news." The New Testament has four good news' books. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each Gospel paints a different picture of Jesus Christ. Why four books?

As adults, we assume a variety of life roles, often at the same time. These roles include being a husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter, etc. We do not change in these roles but we may act differently or emphasize certain qualities in each one. The same is true of Jesus Christ. Each of the four historical narratives in the New Testament pictures a different role or aspect of His life and ministry.

In the Gospel of John, the writer paints a portrait of Jesus as the Son of God. The author is John, one of the twelve disciples, followers who had special access to Jesus and His teachings. As an intimate of Jesus, John was an eyewitness to the events, messages, and conversations from Jesus' public and private life. As a close follower and friend, John opens the door of Jesus' private life and ministry to the world.

The Gospel of John helps answer such questions as:

- Who is Jesus?
- What does it mean to follow Him?
- What is true belief?
- What is eternal life and how does one obtain it?

Keep the above questions in mind as you read and discuss John's writings.

The following time-tested discussion questions will yield new discoveries about each chapter of John. In your discussion, do not feel compelled to talk about each question. You can pick from the variety of questions to encourage discovery. Also, not every section of every chapter has a set of questions. This is designed to keep your discussions focused on the most important parts of John's account. Many of the chapters have a "Conversation Starter" to introduce the main subject of the chapter to the group. This question is optional.

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# John 1

## Conversation Starter.

- If you were God, how would you choose to communicate with man?
- How do you think we can know if God has communicated with us?

**Read** John 1:1-9.

John starts his gospel with a big idea, the “Word.” Our words reveal what is in our hearts and on our minds. So Jesus Christ is God’s “Word,” revealing His heart and mind to us. To connect with his Jewish audience, John’s Gospel parallels the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament. God’s words in Genesis shows a God in action, speaking creation into existence through His words (Genesis 1:3ff). To his Greek or Roman readers, the “Word” represents the unifying, divine principle behind all of creation. Whether his audience is Jewish or Greek, John wants his readers to know that God became a man in Jesus Christ, fully revealing the Father and His ways to us.

- What do verses 1-4 tell us about God’s communication to man?
- John says that the Word is light and life. What do you think he means by light and life?
- How do you think this light and life is different from other sources of light and life (other religious teachers, books, etc.)?
- John describes this light as the “true light” (verse 9). What would qualify one light as being true (implying that another light is false)?
- How do you feel about only one light being true and others being false?
- What test would you ask of Jesus Christ to see if He is true?

**Read** John 1:10-13.

- What does John say about how one becomes a member of God’s family?
- How do you feel about John’s statement that there’s only one way to become a member of God’s family?
- Why do you think some people receive Him and some do not?
- How would you describe your current relationship to God’s family?

**Read** John 1:14-18.

- Jesus is described as being full of grace and truth in verse 17. What do you think these qualities mean?

route, preferring to detour around Samaria to avoid contact with Samaritans.

Jesus chose to travel the route through Samaria. On the way, He met and carried on a conversation with an immoral Samaritan woman. No Jewish rabbi would have voluntarily talked with a woman of “ill-repute,” nor would he have drunk from her cup. Allowing his lips to touch this cup would have been a religiously unclean act, contaminating his person.

## Conversation Starter.

Who could be some “Samaritans” today, people we would avoid?

**Read** John 4:1-42.

- What do you think Jesus wanted to demonstrate by choosing the route through Samaria?
- If you were one of the twelve disciples, how would you feel about this trip through Samaria? About Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman?
- What do you think Jesus meant by being “living water”?
- What do you think is the “thirst” that He talks about? How was the woman thirsty?
- What can keep people from experiencing the living water that Jesus provides?
- How would you describe the woman’s response to this conversation?
- Why do you think her conversation with Jesus had such an impact upon her village (verse 39)?
- What do you think changed in this woman’s life?
- How does a changed life impact the credibility of a message?
- If you lived in the same town as this woman, how do you think you would have responded to her story?
- What do you think it means for Jesus to be the “Savior of the world” (verse 42)?
- Do you think that title is still relevant today?

**Read** John 4:43-54.

- An official from King Herod’s royal court begged Jesus to heal his son. How does Jesus answer this request?
- Does Jesus’ reply surprise you? Why or why not?
- What does Jesus’ reply tell us about true belief?
- Do you think people today approach belief in the same way?
- What role do miracles have in bringing people to faith in Christ?
- Would a miracle make any difference in your belief in God?





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

The story now returns to John the Baptist. A dispute has emerged between John's disciples and a Jewish inquirer.

- What appears to be the nature of this dispute in verses 25-26?
- How does John the Baptist address the question?
- John the Baptist draws some distinctives between himself and Jesus in verses 31-35. What is he saying about how Jesus is different from himself?
- John seems to be building a case for Jesus' authority. He says that Jesus speaks the words of God and everything has been placed in His hands. What do you think it means for Jesus to have everything placed in his hands?
- How do you feel about Jesus' authority?
- John the Baptist makes a black and white statement in verse 36. What do you think it means for people to reject the Son?
- Why does rejecting the Son cause a person to forfeit eternal life?
- How do you feel about John's claim regarding one's eternal destiny and their acceptance of Jesus?
- What do you think it means for God's wrath to remain on a person (verse 36)?
- How can a loving God place His wrath upon people?
- Do you think this statement about God's wrath is still true today? Why or why not?

## John 4

The Jews and Samaritans were religious and political antagonists. After the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to Assyria in 722 B.C., the Assyrians up-rooted the ten Jewish tribes from their land and resettled them with captives from other countries. These other captives brought with them their own gods. The Jews and these captives intermarried creating the Samaritans.

The Jews in Palestine at the time of Jesus considered the Samaritans a compromised people. Their worship of other gods, and the construction of an alternative temple to the one in Jerusalem (John 4:20), betrayed their allegiance to the true God of Israel. Any contact with Samaritans was a violation of an obedient Jew's religious code. They carried this to such an extreme that it affected their travel plans. The shortest route from Jerusalem to Galilee lay on the high road straight through Samaritan territory. However, most Jews would not travel that

- Why do you think it's so significant that Jesus is full of grace and truth?
- How do you think people experience Him as grace and truth?
- If a person is a follower of Christ today, how do you think he or she would demonstrate grace and truth to others?
- John says that no one has ever seen God. What do you think about this statement? Would you agree or disagree?
- Why do you think God chose to make Himself known through Jesus?
- How do you feel about the author's description of Jesus?

Read John 1:19-28.

John the Baptist makes his first appearance in John's Gospel. From his birth, John the Baptist had a special role. He served as an evangelist for Jesus, the coming Messiah. John challenged people to admit their sins and return to God in preparation for the Messiah's coming. Great crowds gathered to hear him preach and many were baptized, including Jesus (Matthew 3:13-16). Like most teachers or rabbis, John had followers or disciples.

- In verses 19-28, how does John the Baptist describe his identity and mission?
- Even though he has a sizable following, how does John the Baptist describe himself in verses 26-27?
- What do you think this statement reveals about his character and mission?

Read John 1:29-34.

- The "Lamb of God" refers to the Old Testament religious system where sheep and goats were sacrificed as substitute offerings for a person's sin or rebellion against God. Why do you think John the Baptist appealed to this cultural image?
- How do you feel about Jesus being called the Lamb of God?
- John the Baptist introduced people to Jesus in first century Palestine. How would a John the Baptist introduce people to Jesus today?

Read John 1:35-51.

- There are five people described in verses 35-51. What are the different reasons why they chose to follow Christ?
- Which of these individuals could you identify with? How do you identify with them?
- What are some reasons why a person would want to follow Jesus Christ today?





## John 2

### Conversation Starter.

John 2 records Jesus' first miracle. Do you think miracles still happen today?

**Read** John 2:1-11.

- Describe the miracle Jesus performs.
- Why do people believe in miracles/not believe in miracles?
- What do you think John wants us to know about Jesus by recording his attendance at a wedding?
- Describe your response to this miracle (amazement, skepticism, disbelief, etc.). Be honest.
- John describes this as a "sign" in verse 11. Why do you think he used the word sign rather than miracle?
- What do you think is significant about this being the first sign?

Read John 2:13-25.

The Passover Celebration was a spring festival celebrating Israel's freedom from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:12-16). In the Exodus account, God commanded the Jewish people to place a lamb's blood over their outside doors. He would "pass over" the houses with the blood, sparing the people inside from judgment. To celebrate this Passover, Jews would eat a special meal together, remembering how God had "passed over" them, sparing them from judgment and securing their freedom from Egyptian slavery. Jewish people from across the Roman Empire would return to Jerusalem for this feast, almost doubling the city's population.

The Jewish temple was strictly divided between people who were Jews by birth and Jews by conversion. Converted Jews worshipped in one area labeled the Court of the Gentiles. Each converted Jew had to pay a temple tax to worship. Since people were coming from around the Roman Empire with a variety of national currencies, they had to convert their currency to the temple money in order to pay the tax and purchase suitable animals for sacrifice. Worship had become a big business.

- Describe the scene at the temple in Jerusalem.
- What do you think led Jesus to take such dramatic steps to clear the temple?
- What does this incident reveal about Jesus?
- If Jesus were to return today, what things do you think He would want to clear out of our churches?
- Why didn't Jesus approve the people's beliefs in verses 23-25?

- What type of belief do you think He would find to be appropriate?
- If you were in this crowd, how would Jesus look upon your beliefs?

## John 3

The Pharisees were a prominent conservative branch of Judaism whose followers upheld the Jewish law to the extreme. While they were motivated to maintain the purity of their faith, much of Phariseism had degenerated into an outward obedience to religious minutiae rather than an act of the heart. The word Pharisee means "to separate." By practicing their interpretation of the Jewish law, someone would be pure towards God by separating from the world's contamination. The Pharisees' sizable following made them a powerful religious and political group in Palestine, with members sitting on the influential ruling Council.

**Read** John 3:1-15.

- Let's develop a brief biography of Nicodemus. Who was he? What was his understanding of Jesus? What do the circumstances of his visit reveal about him?
- What was Nicodemus' question?
- How would you describe Nicodemus' understanding of spirituality?
- How did Jesus correct Nicodemus' understanding?
- Why do you think Jesus insisted that one must be "born all over again" to enter God's Kingdom?
- What do you think Jesus means by being "born again"?
- How do you feel about this idea of being born again?
- How would a born-again life look different from other lives?
- Would you consider yourself to be born again in the way that Jesus described it?

Read John 3:16-21.

- What do you think it means that God loves the world?
- How do you think people experience God's love today?
- Why do you think the author makes belief in Jesus essential for obtaining eternal life?
- How would you describe the belief needed for eternal life?
- What happens when one places their belief in Jesus Christ?
- How do you think people today love darkness and not light?
- What could change a person from loving darkness to loving light?
- What have you learned about belief from this section? How could it impact your life?

