

The Unique Teachings of Jesus in John's Gospel

A Peace ~ Love ~ Pray Bible Study

Introduction

The Gospel of John stands apart from Matthew, Mark, and Luke by offering us intimate, profound teachings of Jesus not found elsewhere. Written by "the disciple whom Jesus loved," John's Gospel gives us extended conversations and teachings that reveal the heart of who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him. This study explores these unique teachings, what Jesus meant by them, and how we can apply them as His disciples today.

Teaching 1: The New Birth - Born Again

Scripture: John 3:1-8

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:3, 7-8) Nicodemus asks Jesus, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter his mother's womb a second time to be born?". John 3:4"

What Jesus Meant:

When Nicodemus, a Pharisee and teacher of Israel, came to Jesus at night, he was seeking answers. Jesus responded with one of His most revolutionary teachings: spiritual rebirth. Jesus wasn't talking about physical birth or simply trying harder to be religious. He was explaining that entering God's kingdom requires a complete spiritual transformation, free will and being "born of the Spirit."

This teaching challenged everything Nicodemus knew. Religious practice, heritage, and good works cannot earn salvation. Instead, God's Spirit must give us new life. We cannot manufacture spiritual birth through our own efforts. It's a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that transforms us from the inside out.

The wind metaphor is beautiful, we can't see the wind, but we see its effects. Similarly, we can't fully explain how the Spirit works, but we see the transformation in people's lives when they're born again.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Personal Reflection:** Can you identify the moment when you were "born again", when the Spirit gave you new life? How has your life shown evidence of this spiritual rebirth?
2. **Sharing Your Faith:** How would you explain being "born again" to someone who, like Nicodemus, thinks religion is about following rules and being good?
3. **Living It Out:** In what areas of your life do you still try to earn God's approval through "religious" efforts rather than living from the new life the Spirit has already given you?

Teaching 2: Living Water - Eternal Satisfaction

Scripture: John 4:10-14

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water... Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:10, 13-14)

What Jesus Meant:

Jesus spoke these words to a Samaritan woman at a well, someone who was considered an outcast by both Jews and her own community. She had come to draw water in the heat of the day, likely avoiding others because of her reputation. Jesus used her physical need for water to address her deeper spiritual thirst.

The "living water" Jesus offers represents the Holy Spirit and the eternal life He provides. Unlike physical water that temporarily quenches thirst, Jesus offers something that satisfies our deepest longings permanently. The woman had been searching for fulfillment through relationships (she'd had five husbands and was living with a man who wasn't her husband), but Jesus offered what she truly needed.

The beautiful part of this metaphor is that this living water doesn't just satisfy, it becomes "a spring of water welling up." When we receive what Jesus offers, it doesn't remain static. It becomes a source of life that flows out from within us, blessing others and continually renewing us.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Identifying Your Thirst:** What "wells" have you gone to seeking satisfaction, relationships, success, possessions, approval, that left you still thirsty? How has Jesus provided something different?
2. **Becoming a Spring:** How can you allow the "living water" Jesus has given you to flow out to others who are spiritually thirsty? Who in your life needs to encounter this living water?
3. **Daily Dependence:** What would it look like to "drink" from Jesus daily rather than returning to sources that can't truly satisfy? How can you develop this habit?

Teaching 3: I AM the Bread of Life

Scripture: John 6:35-40, 47-51

"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me... Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." (John 6:35, 38, 47-48, 51)

What Jesus Meant:

This teaching came the day after Jesus fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. The crowds followed Him, wanting more physical bread, but Jesus redirected them to their deeper need for spiritual nourishment. By calling Himself "the bread of life," Jesus claimed to be essential for spiritual survival.

Just as bread was the staple food in their culture it was necessary for physical life, just as Jesus is necessary for spiritual life. This wasn't what the crowds wanted to hear. They wanted a Messiah who would provide food and political freedom. Jesus was offering something far greater - Himself.

The phrase "eat my flesh" was shocking and confusing to His listeners, but Jesus was speaking of complete dependence on and identification with Him. Just as we consume food and it becomes part of us, we must receive Jesus fully, His life, death, and resurrection become our spiritual sustenance. This teaching pointed forward to His sacrificial death on the cross.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Daily Bread:** Jesus taught us to pray for "daily bread." How does depending on Jesus as your spiritual bread look different from just coming to Him when you're in crisis?
2. **Costly Discipleship:** Many followers left Jesus after this teaching because it was too difficult (John 6:66). What teachings of Jesus challenge you most? Are you willing to stay even when His words are hard?
3. **Sharing the Bread:** How can you introduce others to Jesus as the "bread of life"? Who do you know that is spiritually hungry and needs to hear this message?

Teaching 4: I AM the Light of the World

Scripture: John 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46

*"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
(John 8:12)*

"While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5)

"The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you... While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light... I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness." (John 12:35-36, 46)

What Jesus Meant:

Jesus made this bold declaration during the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, likely in the temple courts where massive lampstands were lit to commemorate God's guidance of Israel through the wilderness. By calling Himself "the light of the world," Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of what those lampstands represented.

Light reveals truth and exposes what's hidden. Darkness represents sin, ignorance, and separation from God. Jesus came to illuminate the way to the Father, to expose sin, and to provide guidance for living. Without His light, we stumble in spiritual darkness, unable to see the truth about God, ourselves, or the right path forward.

When Jesus healed the man born blind (John 9), He demonstrated this truth physically and spiritually. The Pharisees could physically see but were spiritually blind, while the formerly blind man received both physical sight and spiritual insight to recognize Jesus as Lord.

Jesus emphasized the urgency: "walk while you have the light." Opportunities to respond to His light won't last forever. We must respond while we can.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Walking in Light:** What areas of your life have you been trying to keep in darkness, hidden from Jesus' light? What would it mean to bring those areas into His light?
2. **Being Light:** Jesus also called His disciples "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). How can you reflect His light to others who are walking in darkness?
3. **Urgency:** Who do you know that needs to hear about Jesus as the Light before darkness overtakes them? How can you share this urgent message with love?

Teaching 5: I AM the Good Shepherd

Scripture: John 10:7-18, 27-30

"I am the door of the sheep... If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:7, 9-11, 14-15, 27-28)

What Jesus Meant:

This teaching followed Jesus' healing of the blind man and His confrontation with the Pharisees. Jesus contrasted Himself with the religious leaders who were supposed to shepherd God's people but instead exploited and misled them.

In ancient Israel, shepherding was a humble but essential occupation. Shepherds lived with their flocks, guided them to food and water, protected them from predators, and would risk their lives for their sheep. Jesus used this familiar image to show His relationship with His followers.

As the "good shepherd," Jesus doesn't just guide, He sacrifices Himself for His sheep. This was a direct prophecy of His death on the cross. Unlike hired hands who run when danger comes, Jesus willingly lays down His life. He knows each of His sheep personally, and they recognize His voice among all the competing voices in the world.

The promise is profound, those who are His sheep will never perish, and no one can snatch them from His hand. This teaches both the security of our salvation and the intimate, personal relationship Jesus has with each believer.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Recognizing His Voice:** In a world full of voices telling you how to live, how to find meaning, and what to believe, how do you recognize and follow the Shepherd's voice?
2. **Abundant Life:** Jesus promised "abundant life." How is this different from the prosperity or comfort the world offers? What does abundant life in Christ look like practically?
3. **Sacrificial Love:** The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep. How does His sacrificial love change the way you approach relationships and challenges in your own life?

Teaching 6: I AM the Resurrection and the Life

Scripture: John 11:17-27

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

What Jesus Meant:

Jesus spoke these words to Martha as she grieved her brother Lazarus's death. She had just expressed her faith that Jesus could have healed Lazarus if He had arrived earlier, and she believed in a future resurrection "on the last day." Jesus' response radically redirected her understanding.

Jesus didn't just promise future resurrection, He declared that He Himself IS the resurrection and the life. Resurrection isn't merely an event - it's a Person. Eternal life isn't something we wait for; it begins the moment we believe in Jesus. Physical death for believers is not the end but a transition, because we're united with the One who conquered death.

By raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus demonstrated His power over death and foreshadowed His own resurrection. This miracle showed that His claims weren't empty, He truly has authority over life and death. Martha's faith grew from believing Jesus could heal to believing He is Lord of life itself.

The question Jesus asked Martha is the same He asks every person: "Do you believe this?" Our answer determines our eternal destiny and transforms how we live in the present.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Present Eternal Life:** How does knowing that eternal life begins NOW (not just after death) change the way you live today? What difference should this make?
2. **Facing Death:** How does Jesus' promise as "the resurrection and the life" help you face your own mortality or the loss of loved ones? How can you offer this hope to others who are grieving?
3. **Bold Faith:** Martha had to believe something that seemed impossible. What impossible situation in your life needs you to trust that Jesus is Lord over it, even when circumstances say otherwise?

Teaching 7: I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Scripture: John 14:1-6

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going... I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:1-4, 6)

What Jesus Meant:

This teaching came during Jesus' final night with His disciples before His crucifixion. They were troubled, sensing something terrible was about to happen. Jesus comforted them by revealing the purpose of His departure and making an exclusive claim about salvation.

By saying "I am THE way" (not "a way"), Jesus declared that He is the only path to the Father. This isn't narrow-minded exclusivity, it's the reality of how God designed salvation. There's only one bridge across the chasm sin created between humanity and God, and that bridge is Jesus Christ.

He is "the truth"—the ultimate reality about God, humanity, sin, and salvation. All truth finds its source and fulfillment in Him. He is "the life" not just someone who teaches about life or gives tips for living, but the source of life itself.

Notice Jesus didn't say, "I will show you the way" or "I will teach you the truth." He said, "I AM." Salvation isn't about following directions or embracing philosophy, it's about a relationship with a Person who Himself is the way, truth, and life.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **The Exclusive Claim:** How do you respond to the claim that Jesus is the ONLY way to the Father? How can you share this truth with love to those who believe there are many paths to God?
2. **Living as His Disciples:** If Jesus is "the truth," how should that affect what you believe and how you make decisions? What "truths" might you need to surrender to align with Him?
3. **Troubled Hearts:** Jesus began by saying "Let not your hearts be troubled." What troubles your heart right now? How does knowing Jesus is preparing a place for you and will return bring you peace?

Teaching 8: I AM the True Vine

Scripture: John 15:1-11

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing... As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love." (John 15:1-5, 9)

What Jesus Meant:

On that final night before His crucifixion, Jesus gave His disciples this beautiful metaphor of spiritual life. In Israel, vineyards were common, and everyone understood how vines worked: branches must remain connected to the vine to receive life-giving nutrients, or they wither and die.

Jesus is the "true vine" the genuine source of spiritual life, in contrast to Israel who was supposed to be God's vine but failed. The Father is the vinedresser who carefully tends the vine. He removes dead branches and prunes living branches, not to harm them but to increase fruitfulness.

The repeated command is "abide" remain, stay connected, live in continuous relationship with Jesus. This isn't about trying harder or doing more religious activities. It's about staying vitally connected to Jesus through prayer, His Word, obedience, and fellowship. Apart from Him, we can do nothing of eternal value, but connected to Him, we naturally bear fruit.

The fruit isn't just for us, it glorifies the Father and blesses others. Jesus revealed the motivation for abiding: His love. We remain in Him because we're responding to His great love for us.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Abiding vs. Activity:** How can you tell the difference between religious activity and truly abiding in Christ? What does "abiding" look like practically in your daily life?
2. **Pruning Process:** Have you experienced seasons when God "pruned" you—perhaps through trials, discipline, or removing things from your life? How did this pruning increase your fruitfulness?
3. **Fruitfulness:** What "fruit" is the Spirit producing in your life as you abide in Christ? (Consider both fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 and fruit of leading others to Christ.) Where do you need to abide more deeply to bear more fruit?

Teaching 9: Love One Another

Scripture: John 13:34-35; 15:12-17

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you... This I command you, to love one another." (John 15:12-14, 17)

What Jesus Meant:

Jesus gave this "new commandment" during His final hours with His disciples. What made it new? The Old Testament commanded loving others, but Jesus gave a new standard and motivation: "as I have loved you." His sacrificial, self-giving, unconditional love becomes both our model and power source for loving others.

This wasn't abstract philosophy, Jesus demonstrated this love by washing His disciples' feet, serving them throughout His ministry, and hours later, dying on the cross for them. He loved them knowing Judas would betray Him, Peter would deny Him, and the others would abandon Him. His love wasn't based on their performance but on His character.

Jesus made this the identifying mark of His disciples not theological knowledge, spiritual gifts, or moral superiority, but love for one another. This love is so radical, so counter-cultural, and so impossible by human strength that when the world sees it, they know something supernatural is happening.

Notice Jesus called this a "command," not a suggestion. It's not optional for disciples. And He called them "friends," showing the intimate relationship He desires with those who follow Him.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Sacrificial Love:** Jesus defined love as laying down your life for friends. Beyond physical death, what does laying down your life look like in daily relationships, with family, fellow believers, neighbors?
2. **The World's Witness:** How is the love within your church or Christian community different from the camaraderie of social clubs or groups? What would make others recognize Christ's love in how you treat one another?
3. **Difficult People:** Jesus loved Judas even while being betrayed. Who in your life is difficult to love? How can you love them "as Christ has loved you," even if they don't deserve it?

Teaching 10: The Promise of the Holy Spirit

Scripture: John 14:15-17, 25-27; 16:7-15

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:15-17)

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26)

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment... When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth... He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." (John 16:7-8, 13-14)

What Jesus Meant:

As Jesus prepared His disciples for His departure, He promised them something better than His physical presence: the Holy Spirit. The word "Helper" (or "Comforter," "Counselor," "Advocate") in Greek is *parakletos*—one called alongside to help. Jesus was their Helper during His earthly ministry; the Spirit would continue and expand that role.

While Jesus could only be in one place at a time, the Spirit would dwell within each believer, making God's presence constant and intimate. The Spirit wouldn't be a replacement for Jesus but would glorify Jesus, teach them about Jesus, and apply Jesus' work to their lives.

The Spirit would have multiple roles: teaching them truth, reminding them of Jesus' words, convicting the world of sin, guiding them into truth, empowering them for ministry, and making Jesus real to them. This wasn't a lesser gift. Jesus said it was better that He go away so the Spirit could come!

Jesus said this was for those who love Him and keep His commandments, showing that the Spirit's presence is intimately connected to obedient relationship with Christ.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Daily Dependence:** How aware are you of the Holy Spirit's presence in your daily life? How can you become more attentive to His leading, teaching, and conviction?
2. **Truth and Conviction:** The Spirit guides into truth and convicts of sin. Are there areas where you've been resisting the Spirit's conviction or ignoring His guidance? What would it mean to surrender to His work?
3. **Empowered Living:** The Spirit empowered the early disciples to boldly proclaim Christ. What task or calling has God given you that feels impossible without the Spirit's power? How can you rely on Him rather than your own strength?

Teaching 11: Servant Leadership - Washing Feet

Scripture: John 13:3-17

"Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." (John 13:12-17)

What Jesus Meant:

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus did something shocking: He took the position of the lowest servant and washed His disciples' feet. In their culture, foot-washing was necessary (people wore sandals on dusty roads) but was such a lowly task that it was typically done by the lowest servant or even non-Jewish slaves.

The disciples had probably been arguing about who was greatest (Luke 22:24). Jesus' response wasn't a lecture but a demonstration. If the Lord of the universe would serve in such a humble way, how could His followers do anything less?

This wasn't just about hospitality or hygiene, it was about the heart of discipleship. Following Jesus means taking the position of a servant, caring for others' needs, and humbling ourselves rather than seeking status and recognition. Jesus didn't just teach servant leadership; He modeled it.

Notice His words: "If you know these things, blessed are you if you DO them." Knowledge isn't enough. Discipleship requires action. It's not enough to admire Jesus' humility, we must practice it.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Status vs. Service:** In what areas of your life are you seeking recognition, position, or status rather than opportunities to serve? What would "foot-washing" service look like in your context?
2. **Uncomfortable Service:** Foot-washing was uncomfortable and undignified. What acts of service feel beneath you or too uncomfortable? How might Jesus be calling you to serve in these ways?
3. **Blessing Through Obedience:** Jesus said we're blessed when we DO these things. Who in your life needs you to "wash their feet" this week—to serve them in a tangible, humble way? Will you do it?

Teaching 12: Remaining in His Love Through Obedience

Scripture: John 14:21-24; 15:9-10

"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him... If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words." (John 14:21, 23-24)

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." (John 15:9-10)

What Jesus Meant:

Jesus repeatedly connected love and obedience, but not in a cold, legalistic way. He wasn't saying, "Obey to earn my love" but rather, "Obey because you love me, and that obedience keeps you experiencing my love."

The relationship between the Father and Son becomes the model: Jesus loved the Father and showed that love through obedience. That obedience didn't earn the Father's love- the Father always loved the Son - but it allowed Jesus to remain in that love relationship. Similarly, our obedience doesn't earn Jesus' love (He already loves us), but it keeps us experiencing the fullness of that love.

Disobedience doesn't end our relationship with Christ (we're secure in Him), but it does damage our experience of intimacy with Him. It's like a child who disobeys their parents, the parents still love them, but the relationship is strained until things are made right.

Jesus promised that obedience leads to deeper revelation: He will "manifest" (reveal, show) Himself to those who obey. The Father and Son will "make their home" with obedient disciples, indicating ongoing, intimate presence.

Questions for Disciples:

1. **Love Language:** Jesus said obedience is how we show love for Him. What commands of Jesus are you finding hardest to obey right now? What does your obedience or disobedience reveal about your love for Him?
2. **Intimacy Through Obedience:** Have you experienced seasons where disobedience created distance in your relationship with Jesus, even though you were still saved? How did obedience restore that intimacy?
3. **Motivation Matters:** What motivates you to obey Christ—fear, duty, guilt, or love? How can you grow in obeying Him from a heart of love rather than obligation?

Living as Disciples of Jesus

The unique teachings of Jesus in John's Gospel reveal not just what Jesus taught but who He is. Every "I AM" statement points to His divine nature and His sufficiency for everything we need:

- **Hungry?** He is the Bread of Life
- **Thirsty?** He is the Living Water
- **Lost?** He is the Light of the World and the Way
- **Vulnerable?** He is the Good Shepherd
- **Afraid of death?** He is the Resurrection and the Life
- **Unfruitful?** He is the Vine that gives life to branches
- **Alone?** He sends the Helper, the Holy Spirit

As disciples, we're called to:

- Be born again by the Spirit
- Drink deeply from Jesus daily
- Walk in His light and reflect it to others
- Follow the Good Shepherd's voice
- Trust Him as Lord over life and death
- Abide in Him as branches to the vine
- Love one another sacrificially
- Depend on the Holy Spirit's power
- Serve others humbly
- Obey Him out of love

These aren't just beautiful teachings to admire, they're truths to live by. Jesus ended many of these teachings with the question: "Do you believe this?" and "Will you do this?"

The same questions echo to us today. We're invited into the abundant life Jesus offers, but it requires response, belief and obedience, receiving and following, trusting and doing.

May we be disciples who not only know these teachings but live them out daily, showing the world what it means to follow Jesus.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank You for revealing Yourself so clearly in John's Gospel. Thank You for being everything we need, our Bread, our Water, our Light, our Shepherd, our Life, our Way, our Vine. Help us not just to know these teachings intellectually but to live them out as Your disciples. Give us Your Spirit's power to love sacrificially, serve humbly, obey joyfully, and abide faithfully. Use us to point others to You, the source of life eternal. In Your name we pray, Amen.



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