

EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Abiding

John 15:1–11

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Detaching . . . a virtue for highly effective leaders? Well, nothing could be further from the truth! According to John 15, Jesus, the most effective servant-leader to walk this earth, emphasized and modeled the value of genuine relationships—not surface, passing acquaintances but deep, nourishing connections with others.

In fact, if we desire for Him to lead our lives, we must commit to remaining in daily fellowship with Him like fruit-bearing branches that receive nourishment from the life-giving vine. Jesus had one word for this vibrant connection between a believer and the Divine. He called it . . . *abiding*.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

When you search the Scriptures, thinking about context is very important. One way to do that is by reading a portion of the Scripture immediately preceding the passage you're studying. Furthermore, if the passage you're studying begins a new chapter, it's helpful to read the preceding chapter in its entirety to see how the two chapters relate.



Searching the Scriptures Tip

Remember: The *gospel* writers were theologians as well as historians, desiring their readers to embrace major truths about God, faith, and themselves. So, for example, thinking through the reasons John included specific events and where they occurred can help you piece together the meaning he intended to convey.

Quotable

*I'd like to show you
how Jesus valued
relationships.*

*The entirety of
John 15, in fact,
revolves around that
very subject.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Read John 14. Make some notes in the space below on what you discover about the relationship between the chapters. What connecting words appear? How are the scenes related in time or sequence? Any clues to geographic location or setting?



Observation: A Survey of John 15

Now that you've compared closely John 14 with John 15, let's survey John 15. To do that, take a few minutes to study the chart below and compare it with what you see in the chapter. By the way, a survey (even making your own chart of a chapter!) helps you understand how a passage fits together.

The Most Important Relationships for Believers

Section	Relationship	Key Term	Emphasis
Verses 1–11	Believers with Christ	“Abide” (NASB) (10 times in 11 verses)	Union
Verses 12–17	Believers with believers	“Love” (4 times in 6 verses)	Communion
Verses 18–27	Believers with the world	“Hate” (8 times in 10 verses)	Disunion

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As you review the chart, what else would you add from your survey of John 15?



Chuck Swindoll offers four clear observations about this passage in John 15. For each one, read the verses and answer the following questions.

The entire passage is for believers only.

What words or expressions in John 15:1–8 help you come to the conclusion mentioned above?

What are some aspects of the believer's relationship to Jesus that are highlighted in these verses?

The verses revolve around one compelling metaphor.

What is the main metaphor Jesus used to describe His relationship to all believers?

In what ways did He develop that metaphor (John 15:2–6)?



The main subject is *abiding* or “remaining.”

How many times in this passage did Jesus use a form of the word *abiding*?

If you're using the New Living Translation of the Bible or another version, what word is used in place of *abiding*?

The result of abiding is fruit bearing.

How did Jesus describe this result of abiding?

What happens to branches that do not bear fruit?



Interpretation: Understanding Metaphors and Imagery

Often, biblical writers used rich imagery to convey meaning. Part of interpretation is identifying the images used and studying what meaning those word-pictures would invoke in the minds of the original audiences. In the picture Jesus painted portraying the importance of abiding, three images stand out: the *grapevine*, the *gardener* or *vinedresser* (NASB), and the *branch*.



The Grapevine

Jesus identified Himself as the genuine *Grapevine* in John 15:1. Obviously, Jesus was not speaking literally. Yet in the same way a grapevine delivers life-sustaining water and minerals to the rest of the plant, Jesus offers spiritual nourishment to the branches attached to Him. What do you think He meant by this analogy?

Jesus referred to the common agricultural practice of pruning branches as necessary to ensure greater growth. What do you think spiritual pruning entails? In what ways did Jesus explain this aspect of His relationship to believers?

If large, juicy grapes are the desired fruit of a well-nourished branch, what would be the spiritual fruit of a believer who abides in Jesus?



The Gardener (or Vinedresser)

According to Jesus' metaphor in John 15:1–4, what is the relationship between Him (the Grapevine) and His Father (the Gardener)?

Read John 15:1–15. Identify the occasions where Jesus referred to His Father. In what way does each reference to the Father help us understand what Jesus meant when He said, “my Father is the gardener” (John 15:1)?

What did Jesus identify as the “fruit” that results from believers abiding in Him? See how many fruits you can identify in verses 1–15, and write them below.

The Branch

Whom did Jesus identify as the *branches* in John 15:2–8?



What is the ultimate result of believers abiding in Jesus and producing much spiritual fruit (John 15:8)?



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlating the Scripture passages you're studying with other biblical passages helps you fine-tune your interpretation. As Jesus' Jewish audience listened to His teaching on vines and branches, perhaps overtones of an ancient prophecy resonated in their minds. Turn to Isaiah 5:1–7, and read it closely.

How does Isaiah's story of the vineyard relate to Jesus' metaphor in John 15?

How are the two passages the same? How do they differ?

Now take a close look at a couple of New Testament passages that describe examples of spiritual fruit in the believer's life. In each one, write down what you discover.

Galatians 5:22–23

Spiritual fruit:



2 Peter 1:5–7

Spiritual fruit:



Application: How Are You Abiding?

To go back to where we began our study, we must acknowledge that as we detach from Jesus—either because of sin or because of doubt and hurt—we soon notice the negative impact on our relationship with Him. Chuck refers to this as spiritual *barrenness*.

In those times when you sensed detachment from Jesus, what sort of consequences did you experience?

In what ways did your detachment cause your loved ones to experience spiritual barrenness too?

Similarly, what did you experience spiritually when you committed to remaining close to the Lord in prayer, worship, and communion with Him through His Word?



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John 15:1–11

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Write down three things you can do to deepen your relationship with Christ.

1.

2.

3.

Find someone with whom you can share your renewed commitment to abiding with Christ. Ask that person to pray for your faithfulness in keeping that commitment to Him.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I am so thankful that You do not allow me to wander too far from the fold of Your grace. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to make a way for me to come to know You through Him. Enable me by Your Spirit to remain close to Him and to bear much fruit that will bring glory to You. In His name I pray, amen.



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John 15:1–11

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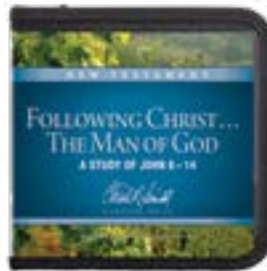
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LET'S BEGIN HERE

David, the psalmist, wrote, “Even when I walk / through the darkest valley, / I will not be afraid, / for you are close beside me” (Psalm 23:4). David sought refuge in the Lord’s close company, especially when hemmed in by the threat of death. Even Jesus didn’t want to step alone into the shadow of the cross (Matthew 26:36–38). It’s no wonder that as He prepared for His execution, Jesus had on His mind the importance of abiding relationships.

Death’s specter strips away the superfluous and refines our focus to that which is genuinely important—our faith that holds us and those few choice individuals who, like branches of a sheltering tree, cover us through grief’s blows. The characteristics of such true friends? Jesus, the Friend of sinners, told us in His own words.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

When searching the Scriptures, there’s no substitute for simply reading God’s Word and allowing His Spirit to speak to you *personally*. Whether studying to deepen your own understanding or preparing to minister to others, allowing truth to transform *you* becomes the primary goal. Remember: God’s Word, like a *mirror*, reflects areas in your life otherwise hidden.

With that in mind, begin your time today in prayer; invite the Lord into your study by asking Him to open your eyes to what He wants you to see, particularly regarding your relationship with other believers (James 1:22–24)!



Observation: Looking Closely at the Words of Jesus

In the *Searching the Scriptures* process, observation helps us piece together the interpretation puzzle. Often, biblical writers use comparison and contrast to communicate meaning. In John 15:12–17, John highlighted a comparison Jesus made in explaining the nature of genuine love.

Quotable

There are individuals in the body of Christ who are waiting and available to be nurtured as friends—to be known and deeply loved by us, that they might know and love us in return.

— Charles R. Swindoll



What strong command did Jesus issue His disciples in John 15:12?

How did Jesus use comparison to illustrate the kind of love with which His disciples are to love each other?

Read back through John 15:12–17. What was the significance of Jesus repeating His command?

What single word or idea is emphasized in this section?



Interpretation: Discovering the Meaning of Christ's Command to Love

As Jesus neared His imminent death on the cross, He had love on His mind in a big way. In this short section of John 15, known as the Upper Room Discourse, He commanded His disciples to love one another. Surrounded by His closest companions, Jesus described the love and communion believers should demonstrate. Let's take a closer look.



Understanding the Command to Love—John 15:12

Jesus issued a compelling command to His disciples: *Love each other*. According to Chuck Swindoll, the word *love* comes from the Greek word *agapē*, which carries with it the idea of a deep, abiding love resulting from a deliberate decision to love another.¹

Knowing the essence of *agapē* love, what do you think that kind of love would look like among believers? Give some specific examples.

Jesus used His own love for the disciples as a model for the kind of love He expected from them. How had the disciples experienced *agapē* love from Jesus?

Exploring the Characteristics of Love—John 15:13–16

After issuing the command to love, Jesus presented four aspects of *agapē* love. Let's take a closer look at each one.

A Disregard for Self—John 15:13

How did Jesus refer to His disciples in this verse?

What did Jesus say is the ultimate expression of sacrificial love?



The primary interpretation of verse 13 refers to Christ laying down His life for the disciples. But He linked His own sacrifice to the idea of friendship. Do you think Jesus expected His followers to willingly die for their friends if that's what was required? Explain your answer.

A Dedication to Mutual Aims—John 15:14

By using the metaphor of friendship, Jesus put forth the principle of friendship that is rooted in obedience to Him. Why is this significant?

What contrast did Jesus employ to highlight the significance of His relationship to His disciples?

A Commitment to Mutual Confidentiality—John 15:15

What reason did Jesus give for referring to His disciples as “friends”?



Why do you think Jesus mentioned His relationship to His Father?

A Shared Desire for Success—John 15:16

Jesus made an astounding assertion that aligned His mission, which culminated at the cross, with the consecrating impact of *agapē* love.

What did Jesus say is the result of this covenant-love relationship between Himself and His disciples?

Jesus conferred upon His disciples a certain spiritual authority. What is that authority related to? Why is this significant?



**Correlation: How Does It Relate?**

Often biblical scholars substantiate their interpretation of a passage of Scripture or even a single word by comparing it with other passages in the Bible. This is called correlation. Respected New Testament scholar D. A. Carson explains the great honor Jesus bestowed on His disciples in this passage from John 15. (Watch for the correlating passages!)

An absolute potentate demands obedience in all his subjects. His slaves, however, are simply told what to do, while his friends are informed of his thinking, enjoy his confidence and learn to obey with a sense of privilege and with full understanding of their master's heart. So also here: Jesus' absolute right to command is in no way diminished, but he takes pains to inform his friends of his motives, plans, purposes. . . . In times past God's covenant people were not informed of God's saving plan in the full measure now accorded Jesus' disciples. Although there is much they cannot grasp (16:12), within that constraint Jesus has told them everything he has learned from his Father. The Paraclete [Holy Spirit] whom Jesus sends will in the wake of the cross and resurrection complete the revelation bound up with the person and work of Christ (14:26; 16:12–15), thereby making Jesus' disciples more informed, more privileged, more comprehending than any believers who ever came before.²

**Application: How Will You Respond?**

Returning to the image of Christian friendship being like branches of a sheltering tree, Chuck offers two general applications from this passage:

1. *Sheltering trees have fruit that promise security, confidence, care, and encouragement to our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.*

Write down some specific ways you can offer these things to your fellow believers.



2. *Sheltering trees have roots that abide.*

Write down some things you can do continually to assure your friends in Christ that your love is unconditional and will go the distance.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Jesus, my Brother and Friend. Form in me the fruit of Your Spirit that offers sacrificial love to my fellow believers. Teach me to love them like Christ loves me. In His exalted name, I pray, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on John*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Carol Springs, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 291.
2. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 523



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Qualities of a Friend

John 15:12–17

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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

The Promise of Persecution

John 15:18–16:4

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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LET'S BEGIN HERE

Chuck Swindoll observes that many people these days live life on the path of least resistance, choosing a more expedient route to success and fulfillment over the more challenging passes of sheer discipline and steep determination. Sadly, that mentality has seeped into the mind-set of many Christians too.

Yet Jesus calls us to traverse a narrower, more perilous *path to glory* (Hebrews 2:10). In fact, as we will discover in our study of John 15:18–16:4, the Christian journey follows a road paved with sharp stones of persecution—a road less traveled, blazed by Jesus Christ, God's Son. So tighten your bootstraps; it could get a little dicey!



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

By reading John 15:18–16:4 in its entirety, you gain a broad perspective of its overall meaning. In our last study, Jesus taught His followers to love each other with a sacrificial love (John 15:9–17). In John 15:18–16:4, He contrasts God's *agapē* love with another powerful human emotion: *hate*. Read through this passage carefully and thoughtfully and, as you do, write down any initial impressions.

Quotable

Our Lord has designed a plan whereby we must continue to live in this world—but guard ourselves from loving it. That plan, truth be told, involves persecution and resistance.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Observation: Bombarding the Text with Questions

One strategy for digging into the meaning of a passage is to bombard the text with questions. That simply means to find the main idea of the passage and ask questions that shed light on its meaning. The most common questions are *who?* *what?* *when?* *where?* and *why?*

Jesus clearly intended to prepare His disciples not for the *if* of persecution but the *when*. Among the many promises He gave His followers was the promise of persecution. Let's use this basic observation technique to discover what that really means.

Who Will Do the Persecuting? John 15:18–19

Who did Jesus say will persecute His followers?

What reason did Jesus give for why His followers would be targets of persecution?

The word Jesus used for *world* is the Greek word *kosmos*. The word literally means, “world system.” Who was Jesus referring to in this passage?



Later, in John 16:2, Jesus identified in more specific terms the persecutors. What would they do specifically to followers of Jesus?

What Can Be Expected? John 15:18–25

What kind of response should Christ's followers expect from the world system?

Read John 15:18–25. Trace Jesus' use of the word *hate*. Make notes about how many times He used the word in this passage. What reasons did Jesus cite for the world's hatred toward Him and His followers?



Interpretation: The Meaning of Christ's Promise of Persecution

Chuck observed that the Greek word for *persecute* literally means “to hunt down or chase, as a wild beast hunts its prey.” That's a vivid picture of what Christians can expect to face from a world that hates them. In this section of John's gospel, Jesus offered three reasons why His followers will be persecuted for their faith.

1. *Because Christians are not of this world* (John 15:19)

The world demands conformity. It has a certain pattern or mold it expects everyone to fit (Romans 12:2). It loves and accepts those who fit the mold and hates and persecutes anyone who does not.



2. *Because the persecutors don't know the One who sent Jesus* (John 15:21)

Beneath its superficial surface, the world seethes in a turbulent cauldron of unbelief, resulting in resentment toward those who walk in the truth. A Christ-honoring life, lived in the light of God's Word, pierces the darkness and stirs up an infestation of negative emotions.

3. *Because the Word must be fulfilled* (15:25)

The very presence of Christ's followers in the world brings a conviction of sin and guilt to those who have not yet believed. That guilt often translates into a hatred toward believers. The darkness attempts to overcome the light of truth. But light always overcomes the darkness.



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlation is the *Searching the Scriptures* method that helps strengthen your interpretation of a biblical passage by comparing it to other portions of Scripture. In John 15, Jesus made sure His disciples understood the world hated them for everything they believed about Jesus. Remember Jesus' words to Nicodemus?

God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.
(John 3:19–21)

How did Jesus' words to Nicodemus relate to His words to His disciples in John 15:25?

Why do unbelievers hate Christians, according to Jesus?





Application: How Will You Respond?

As we conclude this lesson, let's consider three applications that Chuck offers at the close of his message:

1. *There is a great difference between picking a fight and enduring persecution.*

Sadly, some Christians can be abrasive and possess an unusual penchant for rubbing people the wrong way. Others take more extreme actions and resort to fighting rather than representing the peace and grace of Jesus to those outside the faith.

Write below about a time in your life when you experienced an abrasive response from a fellow believer. How did it make you feel?

Read Romans 12:18. What did Paul suggest as the Christ-honoring approach for relating to an unbelieving world?

2. *There is a great difference between loving the world and living in the world.*

List some ways you and your family could live in the world as representatives of Jesus but resist loving—or buying into—the world's values.



How can you share the light of Christ with someone in your community who clearly does not embrace the truth of Christ?

3. *There is a great difference between running scared and being informed.*

The prophetic clock is synchronized with God's timetable. God has provided His prophetic Word to prepare us for the future, not to frighten us with dire warnings and predictions (Matthew 24). How do Jesus' words about the inevitability of persecution equip *you* to share the light of truth in an increasingly dark world?

What are some ways you can ensure that you and your family experience the peace of Christ despite resistance to your faith and your biblical values?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I am so thankful that You have not left us to ourselves to fend off the darkness and fight alone against those who would persecute us for our faith in Your Son. Grant me the wisdom and power to lead my family in a way that brings hope and courage in the face of mounting resistance and personal attacks. Set Your angels charge over us as we walk with You and share the light of Your gospel in all the dark places around us. In the powerful name of Jesus, Your Son, amen.



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The Promise of Persecution

John 15:18–16:4

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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Functions of the Holy Spirit

John 16:4–15

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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In one delightful account of a junior Sunday school class studying the Trinity, the teacher asked her students, “Who can tell me who makes up the Holy Trinity?” The children excitedly raised their hands, begging to reply. Unwilling to wait, one boy blurted out, “the Father, the Son, and the *Holy Smoke!*”

That’s a funny story, though not far off from describing the confusion many people experience about the nature of the Holy Spirit. Thankfully, God’s Word and, particularly, this section from John’s gospel, dispel the fog with clear teaching on the functions of the Spirit. Let’s listen in.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

When beginning a study of a subject as expansive as the Holy Spirit, a good overview of the topic can jumpstart your thinking. Chuck Swindoll has provided a helpful chart that surveys the Holy Spirit’s work in the lives of both unbelievers and believers. Take a few minutes to study the chart and make any observations.

Quotable

*The Holy Spirit
is never the
One exalted—
the Spirit has one
singular message—
Jesus Christ,
God’s Son.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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SURVEY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK

In what areas does the Holy Spirit work? With whom does He sustain a ministry? The chart reveals the answers. He works in two realms—first, among unbelievers, and second, within believers. In each realm He sustains a direct impact.

UNBELIEVERS		BELIEVERS
		At Salvation —once for all—
Restrains Wrong 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12		Regenerates John 3:3–7 Titus 3:5
Convicts of Sin John 16:8–9		Indwells 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19
Sanctifies 2 Thessalonians 2:13 1 Peter 1:2		Baptizes 1 Corinthians 12:13
		Seals 2 Corinthians 1:22 Ephesians 1:13; 4:30
		Gifts 1 Corinthians 12:4–11
		During Christian Life —repeatedly—
		Fills (Controls) Ephesians 5:18
		Illumines (Teaches) John 16:13 1 Corinthians 2:10–13
		Leads Romans 8:14
		Glorifies Christ John 16:14
		Assures (Witnesses) Romans 8:16 1 John 5:7–12
		Comforts Romans 8:26–27

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What did you learn by studying this chart?



What questions arose from your study of the chart?



Observation: Looking at the Ministry of the Spirit

Just by reading John chapters 13 to 16, you can sense a growing uneasiness among Christ's disciples. In John 13, Jesus told them they couldn't go with Him where He was going. In John 15, Jesus warned His disciples about future persecution. Knowing they were feeling unsettled about their future, Jesus explained to them in detail precisely how the Holy Spirit would minister to them.

The Reaction of the Disciples

The disciples' need for support is seen in John 16:4–6.

What did Jesus give as His reason for not previously revealing to His disciples the things that were about to happen to Him (John 16:4)?

Where did Jesus say He was going (16:5)?



What did Jesus say to His disciples in John 16:5 that signaled to them they were about to experience a significant change in their experience?

What emotion did Jesus indicate the disciples were expressing as a result?

Using your imagination, describe what may have been going through the minds of the disciples as they contemplated Jesus' departure and the uncertainty surrounding that realization.

The Solution Jesus Offers

Sensing the disciples' worry, Jesus told them about the Holy Spirit and how He would help them after His departure.

In what way did Jesus frame His leaving? Was this going to be a good experience or a negative one?



Read again John 15:18–16:14, and note how many times Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as He spoke to His disciples. What were some of the various ways in which Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit?



Interpretation: Understanding the Functions of the Holy Spirit

When the Gospel writers included the actual words of Jesus, they intended not only to provide a chronicle of what He said but to teach powerful truths as well. We can learn much about the Holy Spirit, for instance, by the names Jesus used to refer to Him and by studying the roles Jesus indicated the Holy Spirit plays. Let's take a closer look at Jesus' words about the Holy Spirit and the functions of the Spirit's ministry.

The Functions of the Holy Spirit—John 16:8–11

In verses 8–11, Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would have a ministry of convicting the world of three specific things:

Concerning Sin—John 16:9

What specific sin does the Holy Spirit convict the world of committing?

How would you describe the sin of unbelief in the world today?



In what ways do you think the Holy Spirit convicts the world of the sin of unbelief?

Concerning Righteousness—John 16:10

In what way do you think the Holy Spirit brings a knowledge of true righteousness that contrasts the false righteousness of the Pharisees?

According to Jesus, how is true righteousness made available to people who seek it?

Concerning Judgment—John 16:11

Some might read John 16:11 and think Jesus was referring only to future judgment. But He made a statement that helps us interpret this judgment as present and ongoing.

What did Jesus say that brings us to this understanding?



Take a few moments to consult a Bible commentary on John 16:11. Read carefully what is written, and make notes about what you learn. Why did Jesus mention Satan's judgment in this statement about the Holy Spirit?



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlating the Scripture passages you're studying with other biblical passages helps you fine-tune your interpretation. Up until verse 13, Jesus was speaking about the Holy Spirit's ministry to the world—that is, to unbelievers. Starting in verse 12, Jesus spoke about the ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers.

Based on John 16:12–13, what did Jesus say will be the ministry of the Holy Spirit to His followers?

Turn to 1 Corinthians 2:9–13. How do Paul's words about the Holy Spirit compare to what Jesus said about the ministry of the Spirit to believers?

How do Paul's words help us interpret Jesus' words in John 16:12–13?





Application: The Holy Spirit Working in and through Us

To apply this wonderful teaching on the Holy Spirit, we must think about it from a two-fold perspective:

- First, the Holy Spirit desires to work *through* us.
- Second, the Holy Spirit desires to minister *to* us.

In convicting the world of sin, the Holy Spirit desires to use channels.

How can you be a channel of the Spirit to unbelievers around you?

In communicating the Word to us, the Holy Spirit desires to see our lives transformed.

In what ways does the Spirit bring about lasting change in your life? What are some areas in your life that you need the Spirit's power to overcome?



A FINAL PRAYER

Take a few moments to compose a personal prayer in the box below asking the Holy Spirit to use you and change you based on the truths you've learned today.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Functions of the Holy Spirit

John 16:4–15

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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Four Words That Keep Us Going

John 16:16–33

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

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LET'S BEGIN HERE

Jesus' conversation with His disciples was fast approaching an end. The anguish and agony of Gethsemane followed by the trials, scourging, and crucifixion lay before Him like a dark, dismal shadow. His closing remarks tumbled from His lips one thought after another. Time was of the essence. Death lurked near.

Just prior to the Savior's immortal prayer for His disciples (John 17), we observe four main words He punctuated in John 16. Each carried its own message of encouragement and hope—initially to His closest followers and, ultimately, to all who serve and obey Him in faith.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Making sure you prepare your heart before your time in the Scriptures allows the Holy Spirit full access to your study process. The thoughts and emotions the disciples were feeling as they listened to Jesus speak about His departure—even death—surely brought a mix of confusion, uncertainty, sadness, and even fear. It's likely you know someone facing uncertainty who may need the Lord's comfort. Take a few moments to pray for that person right now, asking the Lord personally to encourage him or her with His presence and peace.



Observation: Stepping into the Biblical Scene

Chuck Swindoll recommends using your imagination to step into the biblical scene and fully engage with the emotion and experience of the disciples. Try this technique as you read John 16:16–33.

Quotable

*In preparing
His disciples
for His death,
Jesus took them
from the known
to the unknown,
from the familiar to
the uncharted. He
went from where
they were living
into whole new
vistas of truth they
needed to hear.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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As you do, circle or underline text that indicates how the disciples felt or how they reacted to Jesus' words. How do you imagine these men reacted to Jesus' words? Make notes below.

Confusion of the Disciples

Repeatedly, Jesus told His disciples He was going away—and they wouldn't be coming with Him. In John 16:16–18, what word or group of words did Jesus use multiple times in speaking with the disciples?

Why is Jesus' choice of words significant?

Four Words That Keep Us Going

In John 16:19–33, Jesus offered the disciples reassurances upon which they could hang their hopes. He wanted them to know that despite intensifying periods of persecution, grief wouldn't have the last word. There were four key characteristics their hearts would need before ominous events unfolded.

Joy . . .

In verses 19–20, what emotions did Jesus say the disciples would experience?



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Four Words That Keep Us Going

John 16:16–33

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What illustration did Jesus use in verses 21–22 to describe how the disciples would experience a change from sorrow to joy?

Jesus mentioned two aspects of joy. Read John 16:22 and 16:24 to see if you can identify each. Complete the sentences below with your responses.

Joy will be _____ not temporary (John 16:22).

Joy will be _____ not partial (16:24).

Love . . .

Jesus wanted to make certain the disciples understood just how accessible He'd continue to be long after He left them. Read John 16:23–29. What quality did Jesus introduce in verses 23–24?

What was the basis of the Father's willingness to respond to the disciples' prayers offered in Jesus' name (16:26–27)?



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How would you characterize the disciples' response to Jesus' words (John 16:29)?

Faith . . .

Ultimately, Jesus desired to deepen His disciples' trust in Him. What did Jesus say would test their faith once He was gone (16:32)?

Peace . . .

The result of faith is peace, Jesus taught. What did Jesus say would be the certain experience of the disciples' life on earth (16:33)?

What did He offer to help the disciples endure tough times?





Interpretation: The Meaning of Christ's Promise of Persecution

Chuck provides a compelling interpretation of this entire section in his commentary on John's gospel:

Jesus challenged His disciples—and us by extension—to “take courage.” The Greek term means “to dare,” “to be bold,” “to be of good courage,” “to be cheerful or confident.” The definition includes two other nuanced meanings. First, “to trust in,” “rely on,” and, second, “to be bold against someone or something,” “to go out bravely to.” The entire range of meanings is appropriate to the Lord's exhortation. His victory over the world—sin, evil, Satan, death, the twisted manner by which the world operates—gives us reason to throw ourselves headlong into the conflict. We have nothing to fear. For even if we die, we live.

Joy, love, and peace are ours, if only we will believe in Him.¹



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlation is the *Searching the Scriptures* method that helps you strengthen your interpretation of a biblical passage by comparing it to other portions of Scripture. Do you recall how John opened his gospel?

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it” (John 1:5). In John 16, we read the conclusion of Jesus' teaching ministry: “I have overcome the world” (16:33).

In what way do these two passages tie together?

How do they together reinforce Jesus' desire that His disciples put their hope in Him, even after His ascension?





Application: How Will You Respond?

As we conclude this lesson, let's consider two statements by Chuck to help us apply to our lives what we've learned.

1. "His life may not have been long, but His death was not a mistake."

How can the love, joy, faith, and peace of Christ strengthen you in times of heartache and grief?

2. "My life may not be easy, but I can go on."

In what ways can you offer the light of God's Word to someone struggling to find his or her way through the dark tunnels of uncertainty and doubt?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for not leaving me alone to myself and to my doubts . . . especially during times of great uncertainty and pain. Please grant me Your supernatural joy, love, faith, and peace that I may not lose heart but walk on with great confidence in Your perfect will and plan. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on John*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Carol Springs, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 315.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Four Words That Keep Us Going

John 16:16–33

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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Divine Intercession

John 17:1–19

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

At times, periods of silence and reflection calm our minds and provide much needed clarity and perspective. Leading up to Christ's death, there must have been many moments like this in the lives of the disciples as they took time to consider His words. We will see that in our study from John 17. Before starting this study, take a few moments to sit in silent reflection. Then turn to the Lord in prayer, inviting His presence and direction as you proceed.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

One of the best ways to begin Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* process is to read through the entire passage before beginning your study. In this case, John 17:1–19 contains a portion of a transcription of a prayer Jesus prayed prior to His suffering and death. Take a few moments to read John 17:1–19, writing down any initial thoughts or observations.

Things I noticed for the first time . . .

Things that stood out as significant . . .

Also, thinking about the setting of the biblical scene helps orient you to the place and surroundings of the event you're studying. Chuck believes that Jesus prayed this compelling prayer somewhere during the time He and His disciples

Quotable

*If His Word
is not working in us
in a life-changing
way, the world
will be. Make no
mistake about it:
dusty Bibles lead
to dirty lives
(Romans 12:2).*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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were walking from where He had just delivered the Upper Room discourse (John 13–17), down through what is known as the Kidron Valley.

This would be a good time to turn to the maps section of your study Bible and locate a map titled “New Testament Jerusalem” or something similar. Along the eastern boundary of Jerusalem, you can locate an area known as the Kidron Valley—the ravine that Jesus and His disciples would have crossed on foot. It was somewhere in that area (the ravine) where Jesus perhaps prayed the prayer recorded in John 17.



Observation: Looking at Jesus’ Prayer

In the observation process of *Searching the Scriptures*, at times it’s helpful to look for a certain category of details. For instance, in the prayer Jesus offered on behalf of His disciples, He spoke to His Father about the things He accomplished as well as the unique needs of those for whom He prayed.

Jesus Praying for Himself—John 17:1–5

With His disciples close at hand, Jesus opened His prayer by focusing His attention on His Father. Based on this passage, how do you envision Jesus’ posture in prayer?

What request did Jesus make of His Father (John 17:1)?

How many times did Jesus address God as “Father”? What emotions might you believe Jesus to have been expressing in this opening section of His prayer? Explain.



In verses 2 and 3, Jesus mentioned the basis upon which He is able to offer eternal life to His disciples and all who will follow Him. What is that basis He mentions?

If verses 2 and 3 refer to the *authority* of Jesus, what is the main point Jesus raised with the Father in verses 4 and 5?

Jesus Praying for His Disciples—John 17:6–16

Jesus turned His attention to praying for His disciples. What do you see that demonstrates His heart for these men?

How did Jesus characterize the relationship He had with these disciples and their relationship to the Father?



Jesus mentioned that He had *revealed* to His disciples something significant during His time on earth. What did He reveal to His disciples (John 17:6)?

Jesus highlighted four ways in which the disciples responded to the Father's Word (17:6–10):

- They kept the Father's Word (17:6).
- They acknowledged the Father's provisions (17:7).
- They accepted the Father's plan (17:8).
- They contributed to the Father's glory (17:9–10).

Following the listing of the disciples' responses, Jesus asked the Father for something important on their behalf (17:11–13). What did He ask of the Father?

Jesus made another compelling request in verses 14 through 16, concerning God's protection against Satan and his power. Jesus associated "the evil one" (17:15) with the influences of the world. What request did Jesus make of the Father to safeguard His disciples from both?



**Interpretation: Understanding the Purpose of Jesus' Prayer**

When looking closely at all the requests Jesus made on behalf of His disciples in His prayer to His Father, His ultimate purpose was that these men be kept safe from evil and that they be made “*holy* by [the Father’s] truth” (John 17:11, 17–19).

The word *sanctify* carries much confusion today. It certainly doesn’t mean growing a halo or taking on a glow of super spirituality. Literally, “to be made holy” means *to be set apart* by God for a specific purpose. How are we to be made holy? By the truth of God’s Word. And why are we to be made holy? So that we are useful to God. New Testament scholar D. A. Carson offers a compelling explanation:

Jesus’ followers will be “set apart” from the world, reserved for God’s service, insofar as they think and live in conformity with the truth, the “word” of revelation (John 17:6) supremely mediated through Christ . . . the revelation now embodied in the pages of this [gospel]. In practical terms, no-one can be “sanctified” or set apart for the Lord’s use without learning to think God’s thoughts after him, without learning to live in conformity with the “word” he has graciously given. By contrast, the heart of “worldliness,” of what makes the world the world (1:9), is fundamental suppression or denial of the truth, profound rejection of God’s gracious “word,” his self-disclosure in Christ.¹

**Correlation: How Does It Relate?**

Correlating the Scripture passages you’re studying with other biblical passages helps you fine-tune your interpretation. The ramifications of Jesus’ powerful prayer on behalf of His disciples continued throughout the beginning of the church and are reflected in the epistles of the apostles. Read a few examples below, and write a sentence or two about how each relates to Jesus’ prayer.

Romans 12:1–2

Galatians 5:22–25



Ephesians 4:1–3

3 John 1:4



Application: Truth Alive in Us

Jesus' prayer for Himself, His disciples, and the future generations of believers underscores three fundamental truths about the relationship between prayer and our effectiveness as His disciples:

- First, *prayer helps us keep God's glory as the first priority in every endeavor*. Jesus acknowledged that His life and ministry and all that He had accomplished on earth was to bring glory to the Father. Everything. And that's what ought to mark all followers of Jesus—an unswerving desire to bring glory to God.
- Second, *prayer helps us remember that any God-honoring endeavor will succeed because of His power, not ours*. How tempting it is to go through life relying on our own resources, wisdom, and natural ability. Yet what God desires is that we entrust our lives and endeavors to Him so that He can demonstrate His power through us (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).
- Third, *prayer causes us to look to God for success rather than to the world*. Jesus acknowledged in His prayer that the desires of the world are opposed to those of the Father (John 17:9, 11). Chuck observes, “The world is not a friend to grace; therefore, we should expect resistance, not help in proclaiming the good news. Prayer helps us remember whom to thank for success, even when the world appears to be cooperative.”²



Which of these principles on prayer strikes you as particularly meaningful? What change would you like to make as a result of what you've learned in this study?

Now, imagine yourself beside Jesus while He prayed, and join Him in your own prayer to the Father.



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for including in Your Word this powerful prayer of Jesus. It reminds me that I am not alone in my struggle to follow Him and to live a life worthy of His death and resurrection. Form in me His gracious spirit and holiness. Make me more and more like Him, and continue Your tender process of making me into a useful servant for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 566.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on John*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 4 (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 325.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Divine Intercession

John 17:1–19

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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

When Jesus Prayed for You

John 17:20–26

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LET'S BEGIN HERE

Take a moment to think about Jesus, God's Son, praying for you to the Creator of the universe! The One who knows you in the most intimate ways—your thoughts, affections, fears, and deepest longings of your heart—speaks your name to His Father in heaven (Psalm 139). Such a thought ought to cause each of us to pause and offer a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to Him. Before starting this study, take a few moments to offer praise to the Lord in quiet prayer.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

One of the best ways to begin Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* process is to read through the entire passage before beginning your study. In this case, John 17:20–26 contains a portion of a prayer Jesus prayed prior to His suffering and death. Not only will we examine how Jesus prayed for His disciples but also how He prayed for “all who will ever believe” in Him (John 17:20)! Read John 17:20–26. As you do, write down those things Jesus asked the Father to give His disciples as well as anyone who will believe His message.

Quotable

*In the bruised,
hunchback, broken
fashion of our lives,
we do our best. And
then we stumble
and make a mess of
things, as it were.
The Lord Jesus
says, “No, you’re
Mine. I’m proud
of you. I love you.”
This great prayer
shows us that love.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



Observation: Looking at Jesus' Prayer

Taking time to look closely at repeated words and phrases (even concepts) helps you build an understanding of the overall meaning of a passage of Scripture. Jesus' prayer was filled with rich phrases and repeated ideas, beautifully woven



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together like a tapestry. Read again John 17:20–26, and jot down any patterns you notice. (HINT: Watch for big ideas and connected relationships between individuals and outcomes.) Then answer the following observation questions.

In John 17:20–26, Jesus prayed all His followers would experience three specific things.

1. He prayed for the unity of believers (John 17:20–23). Find the ways Jesus described this unity, and write them below.

What did Jesus say is to be the purpose of unity between all believers (17:21)?

2. He prayed for the destiny of all believers (17:24). According to Jesus, what is the basis for the destiny of all those who follow Him?



3. He prayed for an experience of relational love among all who follow Him (John 17:25–26). What is the basis of believers' love for one another, according to Jesus?

Often during the *Searching the Scriptures* process, the Holy Spirit will prompt you to pray about something related to what you're studying . . . or you may feel compelled to pause and offer a word of thanksgiving or praise to the Lord. Take a moment to express something specific by way of response to the Lord based on what you've studied so far.

Dear Lord, I give You thanks for:



Interpretation: Understanding the Purpose of Jesus' Prayer

Embedded in Jesus' personal and powerful prayer for His disciples are some major theological truths. One major idea is that the Father loves the Son, the Son loves us, and based on that amazing relationship we are compelled to love one another.

How does God's love for the Son serve as a foundation for all other loving relationships in the body of Christ—the church?



What is the significance of Jesus praying for unity and mutual love to be experienced among all believers everywhere?

In what ways does the love of the Father for the Son, the love of the Son for His followers, and the love of believers for one another become a powerful witness to an unbelieving world (John 17:25–26)?



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlating the Scripture passages you're studying with other biblical passages helps you fine-tune your interpretation. The ramifications of Jesus' powerful prayer on behalf of His disciples continued throughout the beginning of the church and are reflected in the epistles of the apostles. Read a few examples below, and write a sentence or two about how each relates to Jesus' prayer.

Romans 12:9–11

Galatians 6:2



Jesus' prayer in John 17 is an example of intercessory prayer. The four other categories of prayer are confession, praise, thanksgiving, and petition. Study Chuck's chart below and compare the five categories of prayer, noting the many scriptural passages that illustrate each category. Also, read Chuck's explanation of our role in prayer, Christ's role, and the results of prayer.

The Christian and Prayer

Every believer is a priest (1 Peter 2:5, 9). Being a set-apart body of priests, we are qualified to represent ourselves to God by direct access (Hebrews 4:16). Our approach to the Father is through Jesus Christ, the Son (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1). He serves as our Mediator, our personal go-between, as we exercise our priestly function.

In prayer, there are at least five specific categories to remember and employ:

Confession	Praise	Thanksgiving	Intercession	Petition
Claiming forgiveness on the merits of Christ's blood at the cross	Expressing glory and adoration to the Godhead	Acknowledging, with gratitude, God's provision on our behalf	Upholding others who are in need	Representing our own needs and requests
Psalm 32:5; 51:1–3; 66:18; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:5–9	1 Chronicles 29:10–12; Psalm 107:8; 150; Hebrews 13:15; Revelation 4:10–11; 5:12–14	Psalm 103:1–8; Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18	1 Samuel 12:23; John 17:20–26; Acts 12:5; 1 Timothy 2:1–2	Job 5:8–9; Jeremiah 33:3; Matthews 7:7–8; 21:22; 2 Corinthians 12:7–9; Hebrews 4:14–16; James 1:5–8

Since praying results in abundant joy (John 16:24), inner peace (Philippians 4:7), stability—"mercy" and "grace"—(Hebrews 4:16), the Father being glorified (John 14:13), and lives being altered (James 5:16), we dare not neglect this essential part of the Christian life. The simple fact is: "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2 NASB).

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What main principle can you glean from this brief study on prayer?



Application: Truth Alive in Us

Three specific applications emerge from John 17:20–26.

To Grow in Unity as Believers Means *Giving In*

Our love for one another guards us against focusing on petty issues that cause division and strife and refocuses us on meeting the needs of others.

List at least three ways you can promote a deeper unity among believers in your congregation or small group through tangible acts of love.

1.

2.

3.

To Know Your Destiny Means *Giving Up*

Knowing our eternal future is certain because of Jesus' work frees us to give up the futile attempts to control everything in our lives and in the lives of those we love.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

When Jesus Prayed for You

John 17:20–26

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List two areas of your life that you need to *give up* control of and surrender to Jesus.

- 1.
- 2.

To Show Christ's Love Means *Giving Out*

Jesus demonstrated His limitless love for us when He emptied Himself, took on humanity, and suffered and died for us on the cross. That meant total self-denial. That's what our love for others should look like too.

Write three ways you can show sacrificial love to those in your family or fellow believers in your local church.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, not only for loving Your Son, Jesus, but for hearing His prayer for me! Thank You for showing such love for me by sending Jesus to rescue me from my sinful, selfish ways. Fill me with the Spirit of Your Son and with His unending love. And shape me into an open vessel from which His love can be poured out on those around me. In Jesus' name, amen.



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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

When Jesus Prayed for You

John 17:20–26

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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Arrest and Trials

John 18:1–24

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

This study may strike you as somewhat technical in nature and therefore perhaps not as personally inspiring. But before making that judgment, take a few moments to read John 18 in its entirety. Ask the Lord to speak to you intimately about the significance of Jesus enduring this series of unjust trials, so you might experience freedom from sin's condemnation.

Allow this lesson to inspire you to think deeply about the meaning of the events recorded in this passage. Remember: "The word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires" (Hebrews 4:12). Let the Word change you!



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Take a few moments to study the chart below that provides an overview of Jesus' trials as presented in the Gospels. Take your time, looking up passages and comparing them with others. Note things you learn that perhaps you'd not known previously.

Quotable

Remember this:

*You and I deserve
that spit, if I may
be so brash.*

*We deserve the
nails in our feet and
hands. It was our
sins that He bore,
not His. He took
our place. Let us
never forget.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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The Trials of Jesus Christ

Trial	Officiating Authority	Scripture	Accusation	Legality	Type	Result
1	Annas, ex-high priest of the Jews (A.D. 6–15).	John 18:13–23	Trumped-up charges of irreverence to Annas.	ILLEGAL! Held at night. No specific charges. Prejudice. Violence.	Jewish and Religious	Found guilty of irreverence and rushed to Caiaphas.
2	Caiaphas—Annas' son-in-law—and the Sanhedrin (A.D. 18–36).	Matthew 26:57–68 Mark 14:53–65 John 18:24	Claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God—blasphemy (worthy of death under Jewish law).	ILLEGAL! Held at night. False witnesses. Prejudice. Violence.	Jewish and Religious	Declared guilty of blasphemy and rushed to the Sanhedrin (Jewish supreme court).
3	The Sanhedrin—seventy ruling men of Israel (their verdict was needed before He could be taken to Roman officials).	Mark 15:1a Luke 22:66–71	Claiming to be the Son of God—blasphemy.	ILLEGAL! Accusation switched. No witnesses. Improper voting.	Jewish and Religious	Declared guilty of blasphemy and rushed to Roman official, Pilate.
4	Pilate, governor of Judea, who was already in “hot water” with Rome (A.D. 26–36).	Matthew 27:11–14 Mark 15:1b–5 Luke 23:1–7 John 18:28–38	Treason (accusation was changed, since treason was worthy of capital punishment in Rome).	ILLEGAL! Christ was kept under arrest, although He was found innocent. No defense attorney. Violence.	Roman and Civil	Found innocent . . . but rushed to Herod Antipas; mob overruled Pilate.
5	Herod Antipas, governor of Galilee (4 B.C.–A.D. 39).	Luke 23:8–12	No accusation was made.	ILLEGAL! No grounds. Mockery in courtroom. No defense attorney. Violence.	Roman and Civil	Mistreated and mocked; returned to Pilate without decision made by Herod.
6	Pilate (second time).	Matthew 27:15–26 Mark 15:6–15 Luke 23:18–25 John 18:39–19:16	Treason, though not proven (Pilate bargained with the mob, putting Christ on a level with Barabbas, a criminal).	ILLEGAL! Without proof of guilt, Pilate allowed an innocent man to be condemned.	Roman and Civil	Found innocent, but Pilate “washed his hands” and allowed Him to be crucified.

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Another excellent resource for you to consult is Chuck's commentary on John's gospel, *Insights on John*, which is part of the Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary series available on the Insight for Living Ministries [Web store](http://www.insight.org). Be sure to study the map of [Jerusalem](http://www.insight.org) and the surrounding area on page 340 of Chuck's commentary as well as the chart on pages 346–347 which lists the 18 specific illegal actions that were taken during the arrest and subsequent trials of Jesus.





Observation: Looking at the Trials

One helpful way to begin to understand the organization of a passage is to study the paragraph breaks and headings included in your Bible. These are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, but they were added by editors who carefully studied the original text and provided structural markers for understanding. Observation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process where you identify significant details that help you build a foundation for interpretation.

What are some of the headings included in your Bible that help break down the structure of John 18? List them below along with the verses that each section includes.

What observations can you make about key individuals, the setting, and the scenes that are described? List what you observe.

KEY PEOPLE:

KEY PLACES:



KEY DETAILS ABOUT SETTING (i.e., times of day, surroundings, etc.):

Much of John 18 includes dialogue, particularly questions and answers. Read through the chapter again, and see if you can determine how many questions were asked of Jesus and how many times He responded. Write your observations below.

Anything jump out at you as significant in terms of main themes present in each trial or setting? If so, how would you summarize those themes?

Using a Bible dictionary such as *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, look up the names of some of the key places and individuals portrayed in this series of trials. Read carefully the information provided for each one, and write down what you discover.

Kidron Valley:

Roman soldiers (*Cohort*):

Annas, the high priest:

Caiaphas:

Temple guards:



Jewish trials (courts):

Pilate:



Interpretation: Understanding the Significance of the Trials

Mostly, John 18 is a record of events that led to Jesus' false accusation and ultimate conviction of treason. But the foundation for understanding John's original purpose in including these details can be found in the ensuing dialogues between Jesus and His interrogators. By paying close attention to *dialogue* in Biblical narrative, you'll discover important building blocks for forming your interpretation. Remember: Interpretation answers the question, *What does it mean?*

Let's look closely at the dialogue sections of John 18 and attempt to answer some interpretation questions.

The Arrest—John 18:1–12

Interestingly, John wrote that "Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him," so He initiated the conversation by asking, "Who are you looking for?" (John 18:4). What did Jesus' calm composure suggest about His readiness for this unfolding of events?

The fact that the arrest took place at night rendered the arrest illegal, according to Mosaic law. Yet Jesus willingly and repeatedly identified Himself as the One for whom they were looking, basically turning Himself over to the authorities (18:5–9).

Four times Jesus said, "I AM he." Why is that significant? Why do you believe John included this repeated phrase?

NOTE: The first set of trials Jesus endured were Jewish trials and should have abided closely with Jewish law as prescribed in the Old Testament. Under Jewish law, no one person could act as judge. The verdict was decided by a "court" of at least three. A more important case might be judged by a band of 23, known as the Lesser Sanhedrin. The ultimate court was the Greater Sanhedrin, consisting of 70 to 73 men. This was the only body that could legally sentence someone to death for a crime.



Trial Before Annas—John 18:12–24

According to Jewish law, such interrogation and trial could not occur at night nor could it be adjudicated by a single individual. Bringing Jesus before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest, was another illegal act.

When asked about His teaching, Jesus responded by telling His interrogator about the nature and content of His teaching.

Why do you think Jesus responded to Annas this way? What would have been the significance of the public witnessing Jesus' teaching?

At that reply, one of the temple guards struck Jesus in the face with his fist. How did Jesus respond? Jesus emphasized the fact that He was “speaking the truth” (John 18:23). Why is that significant?

Trial Before Caiaphas—John 18:24–28

John offered very little detail about the trial before Caiaphas except that it was finished in the early hours of the morning, after which Jesus was taken to the Roman governor Pilate. Again, that detail emphasizes the illegal nature of this trial, having also taken place at night.

What is the significance of Jesus having stood before two very important religious judges, Annas and Caiaphas, prior to being taken before Pilate?



Trial Before Pilate—John 18:29–40

This trial is perhaps the most famous and well-known episode in the entire final drama of Jesus' life and ministry. As the Lamb of God, our perfect Savior, stood before this powerful Roman official, the overtones of vindication were apparent in the unfolding conversation. Pilate, not a believer, was still a reasonable and extremely intelligent individual. He assessed that the charges brought against Jesus by the Jewish leaders seemed questionable.

At first, Pilate brushed Jesus away, urging the Jews to handle the situation themselves. But the Jews persisted, knowing that only a representative of Rome could sentence Jesus to death (John 18:31).

How did Pilate's initial dismissal of the Jewish charges emphasize John's point that Jesus was being unfairly accused?

When Pilate summoned Jesus back to his headquarters, he asked Him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (18:33). Why was that question important?

How did Jesus respond (18:34–37)?

How did Pilate's line of questioning provide an opportunity for Jesus to testify about Himself and the truth He offers to the world (18:36–37)?





Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlating the Scripture passages you're studying with other biblical passages helps you fine-tune your interpretation. Though John did not cover in detail the circumstances of Jesus standing before Caiaphas, Mark did in his gospel. Read carefully Mark's account of this trial in Mark 14:53–65.

How does Mark's account of the trial before Caiaphas compare with John's brief description of it?

The Jewish leaders were struggling to find evidence to convict Jesus and sentence Him to death. Mark wrote that they resorted to recruiting "false witnesses" to testify against Jesus to build their case (Mark 14:55–59).

How does this detail that Mark included about the need for false testimony contrast with Jesus' emphasis on His speaking "the truth" (John 18:37)?

What did Jesus finally say to Caiaphas, according to Mark's account, that caused the high priest to tear his robes and charge Jesus with blasphemy (Mark 14:60–63)?

According to Mark's account, who pronounced the guilty verdict against Jesus (14:64)?

Why is this significant?



**Application: Jesus Our Model in Suffering**

Jesus was slandered and treated inhumanely by a religious and legal system bent on His destruction. But where others could cry, “Mistrial!” He demanded no appeal. He stood and endured all the abuse, shame, and torture to bring about your salvation. All the while, His trust remained firmly in His Father’s gracious purposes and will.

Every step of the way, Jesus left behind a compelling example of how to bear up under suffering unjustly imposed. The apostle Peter, who witnessed all of it, wrote,

For God is pleased when, conscious of his will, you patiently endure unfair treatment. Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are being beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing good and endure it patiently, God is pleased with you. For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:19–21)

Ever been falsely accused and suffered the consequences? Have you recently experienced a painful injustice because someone else simply misunderstood you or ignored the truth?

The key to Christ’s attitude was trust—not in the legal system or the religious systems that ought to treat you fairly and graciously but in “the hands of God, who always judges fairly” (2:23).

Turn your burden of injustice over to Him today. Leave it with Him. He knows exactly what has transpired. He knows your heart. You can trust Him with your integrity. Let Him carry you through this trial.

**A FINAL PRAYER**

Thank You, Father, for allowing Your Son Jesus to endure such horrifying injustice and for receiving the penalty for sin in my place. My heart is filled with gratitude that You and You alone make all things new. I praise You today for Jesus and all He has accomplished for me! In His wonderful name, amen.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Arrest and Trials

John 18:1–24

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

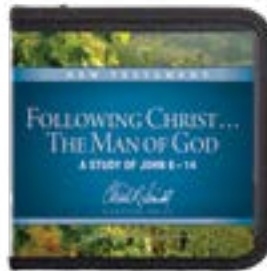
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S08
10

EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Rush to Judgment

John 18:28–19:16

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

When we're reading the Scriptures, the emotions depicted in the scenes can often be overwhelming. In this penetrating exposé of Jesus' multiple appearances before Pilate prior to His crucifixion, one can't help but feel anger, frustration, and sorrow that anyone, let alone gracious Jesus, would be forced to endure such injustice. But that's what hate and envy do—they corrupt the attitudes and motivations of the human heart. The gates of hell opened wide and released the sins of the world upon the loving back of Jesus, the exalted Son of God.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Guard your mind from the perils of overfamiliarity with the text; take a moment to bow in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to offer you fresh insight into the significance and meaning of the events you're about to study. As you do, make certain to express a word of gratitude to the Lord for all He has done to bring about your salvation.



Observation: A Fresh Reading of the Passage

After praying, read John 18:28–19:16. The movement John relayed in this passage is swift and concise. Make some notes about what you observe about the timing, the individuals involved, and the overall posture and demeanor of Jesus throughout the entire ordeal.

Quotable

I urge you simply to plumb the depths as much as you can of what Jesus Christ endured. When you do, you will come away with a renewed appreciation for what the Savior suffered on your behalf.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Rush to Judgment

John 18:28–19:16

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

After leaving the court of Caiaphas, the high priest, the Jews led Jesus to the Roman governor's headquarters. This is where Pilate resided and sat as overseer of Judea (John 18:28).

About what time of day do you believe Jesus was brought before Pilate? How would you know? Why is the time significant?

What was Pilate's initial question, and to whom does he direct it (18:33)?

This would be a good time to consult a Bible dictionary to learn important information about some of the key players in Jesus' trials. For instance, you can look up entries for *Caiaphas* the high priest and *Pilate* the governor of Judea. By exploring pertinent information about the characters crucial to the story, you can begin to build your interpretation of the passage.

How would you compare the questions the high priest asked Jesus (18:19–24) with the questions Pilate asked Jesus (18:28–38)?

Why did the Jews feel compelled to bring Jesus to Pilate? What was their ultimate objective (18:30–32)?



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S09
2

In the opening verses of John 19, the tension escalates to fever pitch. What actions by Pilate and the soldiers caused the situation to intensify (John 19:1–5)? Write them down in sequence below.

-
-
-
-
-

All of this eventually led to Pilate handing over Jesus to be crucified. What was the turning point for Pilate according to John's account (19:6–8)?



Interpretation: Coming to Terms with the Importance of Pilate

Often one person's actions or decisions can affect circumstances for good or for ill. This seems to be the case when Jesus was brought before Pilate. As governor of Judea, he had an obligation not only to administer justice but to keep the peace in his region. This was no small task given the heightened tensions between the Jews and the Romans, especially during the time of Jesus.

As a result, Jesus was certainly rushed to an unjust judgment. Pilate simply caved to the political pressure of the Jews.

In the sovereign plan of God, the Jews' determination to eliminate Jesus as a threat to their religious power and prestige, coupled with Pilate's inability to withstand the political pressure, brought about a sequence of events that led Jesus to the cross.



The apostle John powerfully wove a compelling narrative with twists and intrigue. He illustrated the irony of how human folly and the most base and deprived of human motives brought about Christ's finished work of redemption for all sinners everywhere (1 Peter 2:24).

Pause a moment to offer praise to God for ushering in your salvation through the wondrous, enduring love of Christ! Write a sentence or two of thanksgiving!



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlating the Scripture verses you're studying with other biblical passages helps you fine-tune your interpretation. Matthew's concluding statement of this very scene with Jesus before Pilate, for instance, offers a compelling interpretive clue to the significance of Pilate's final decision to hand over Jesus to be crucified.

Take a moment to read Matthew 27:24–26. According to Matthew, what ultimately led Pilate to make this fateful decision?

What did Pilate do after handing over Jesus to death?



Discuss in your own words the irony of Pilate's words, "I am innocent of this man's blood" (Matthew 27:24).



Application: Where Do You Stand?

The trials of Jesus are long over. The jury rendered its verdict. Innocent blood was shed. Pilate chose to wash his hands in a final desperate act of weakness and fear. The crowd cheered. The disciples fled.

That leaves you . . . and all who stand reflecting on the death of Jesus. Where are you when Christ's message and reputation stand in the balance? Do you duck and run, mumbling to yourself about not wanting to force your religion on others? Do you join in the folly and follow the crowd? Or do you wash your hands of the whole thing, refusing to take a stand?

Is it hard to stand by Christ when the world rails against Him? Is it even harder when those closest to you so easily desert Him for lesser purposes and more comfortable surroundings?

Yet He will never leave you . . . nor forsake you. And He will never allow anything or anyone to come between your relationship with Him (Romans 8:38–39).

Contrasting groups form around the cross of Jesus—those standing *for* Jesus and those standing *against* Him. The real question becomes: Where do *you* stand with Jesus? In the space below, express to the Lord your desire to stand with Him regardless of the pressures you may face.





A FINAL PRAYER

Father, forgive me for going weak in the knees when the pressure to fall away from Christ intensifies. Strengthen my resolve to stand firm in my trust in Him and in my bold witness of His grace in my life. Thank You, Father, for loving me so much that You were willing to watch Him suffer and die so that I could live eternally. I give You my whole life. In Jesus' name, amen.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Rush to Judgment

John 18:28–19:16

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

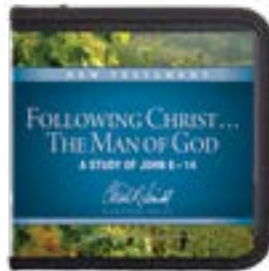
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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

A Crack in the Rock

John 18:10–18, 25–27

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The gospel of John closes with Peter's behavior on full display. In fact, Peter's denial of Jesus in John 18 rivets our attention to how very alone Jesus was on His way to the cross. We will learn some valuable lessons from Peter's desertion, which Chuck Swindoll refers to as "a crack in the rock."

In the final chapter of John's gospel, Jesus gently put back together the broken pieces of Peter's heart, revealing His grace to be greater than any of our failures and His power to restore stronger than any of our regrets. Let's take a closer look at how Peter's downfall began.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As Jesus drew closer to the cross, the scenes John described toward the end of his gospel grew increasingly intense. Emotions were high—nerves at fever pitch—and judgment at times felt clouded, even failing. As you read this passage from John 18, try to imagine being right there watching everything. Think about the sounds. Consider the emotions that would have been at play among the disciples, the guards and soldiers, the Jewish leaders . . . and even Jesus. Take a few moments to write down your thoughts before you begin this study.



Observation: Looking at the Trials

Observation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process where you identify significant details that help you build a foundation for interpretation. John provided some compelling details in the opening verses of John 18 that help frame the intensity of the scene. Let's look closely at how he accomplished this.

Quotable

*This took place
the last night
Jesus was with
His disciples.
The cross loomed
large. In a matter
of hours, He would
be nailed to it.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

A Crack in the Rock

John 18:10–18, 25–27

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STUDY

Reading back through John 18:1–11, what words would you use to describe the scene?

Who was present? Who were the acting players in 18:1–4?

How would you describe Jesus' demeanor during this ordeal based on these few verses?

What about Peter? What does his action reveal about his emotions and his response to the events (John 18:10)?

How would you contrast Jesus' response to Peter's rash behavior (18:10–11)?



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Interpretation: Understanding the Significance of the Trials

Mostly, John 18 provides a record of events that led to the false accusation and ultimate conviction of Jesus. The scene offers a window into Peter's character and his state of mind during this perilous time. Peter's response when the heat was on indicates the condition of his heart and his level of commitment toward the Savior.

Peter's failure to acknowledge his relationship with Jesus was not a sudden blowout but a gradual descent into shame.

The Process of Denial

First, we see *a reliance on the flesh when faced with opposition* (John 18:10–11).

What aspect of Peter's violent response to Jesus' arrest betrayed his reliance on his own flesh?

What emotions do you think drove Peter to commit such a gruesome act?

How might our emotions draw us away from relying on the Holy Spirit?



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

A Crack in the Rock

John 18:10–18, 25–27

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Second, Peter showed *a reluctance to stand alone when in wrong company* (John 18:15–18). Trailing the captive Christ at a distance, Peter began to weaken—the crack in his resolve to follow Christ to His death widened. All it took for his knees to buckle was a suspicious glance and a probing question from a young servant girl.

Why do you think the young girl’s remark posed such a threat to Peter?

What role does fear play when we fail to acknowledge publicly our relationship with Christ?

When you read this account of Peter’s quick denial, how does it make you feel? Why?

Third, Peter demonstrated *a resistance to identification with Christ when threatened by the outcome* (18:25). Too often we respond out of self-preservation instead of devotion to the Lord, especially when it’s dangerous to identify with Him.

In Matthew’s account of the same scene, Peter’s response to the question was even more emphatic as he declared, “I don’t even know the man” (Matthew 26:72).



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Put yourself in Peter's sandals. What do you think was going through his mind as he warmed his hands by the fire? Describe a similar situation in your life when fear kept you from publicly acknowledging Jesus.

Finally, Peter consistently *rejected the truth regardless of the circumstances* (John 18:26–27). With each successive denial, Peter's emotions intensified. Again, we turn to Matthew's account to see the intensity of Peter's response:

A little later some of the other bystanders came over to Peter and said, "You must be one of them; we can tell by your Galilean accent." Peter swore, "A curse on me if I'm lying—I don't know the man!" (Matthew 26:73–74)

How can our fear cause us to act irrationally when threatened with danger?



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

By looking back and then forward, you can bring into focus the passage you're studying. For instance, Peter's denials of Jesus become intensely powerful considering his earlier bold confessions of allegiance. Read the passages below, and in your own words describe how each sheds light on the significance of Peter's failure.

Matthew 16:13–19



Matthew 26:31–35



Application: Jesus Our Model in Suffering

How easy it is to stand in judgment and wag our fingers at Peter, highlighting his shameful missteps. But placing ourselves in the story so the Spirit can speak to us ensures that we apply truth to our own lives, not just to the experience of others. Chuck offers two compelling principles worth considering:

1. *When surrounded by wrongdoers, doing wrong comes easily.* One well-known pastor once said, “Show me your friends, and I’ll show you your destiny.” That’s a good word for anyone desiring to examine the influence—for good or bad—friends have on determining one’s future.
2. *The first step toward recovery is not to act like we’re strong but to admit we are weak.* No one can honestly condemn Peter. Who wouldn’t react as Peter did if faced with such difficult circumstances! Remember: most of the other disciples abandoned Jesus to stand alone before His accusers. At least Peter still followed Him.

How far are you willing to follow Jesus? Are you currently being questioned or ridiculed about your relationship with Jesus? If so, what is the circumstance and what are people saying?

Write down a prayer of commitment to remain true to the Lord. Ask the Father for extra grace to stand firm in your faith and speak boldly about your Savior even when you may feel weak.





A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for reminding me that You understand my weakness and show compassion when I admit my need for You. Give me courage today to stand for Jesus and to declare His goodness and grace to anyone I may encounter. Be near today to courageous believers around the world who suffer for His name, especially those who sit in prison cells because of their bold devotion to Christ. Deliver them, Father. In Jesus' name, amen.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

A Crack in the Rock

John 18:10–18, 25–27

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

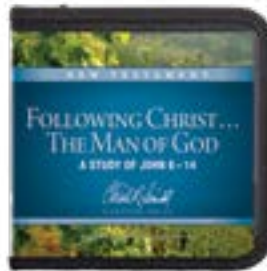
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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Death on a Cross

John 19:16–37

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

There can be no more ominous words in all biblical literature than John's succinct description of this final journey for Jesus: "So they took Jesus away. Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called the Place of the Skull" (John 19:16–17).

One can only imagine the thoughts running through the Savior's mind as He stepped closer to that place of horror—His final appointment in carrying out His Father's will on Earth. Yet it was there on that cruel tree where humanity's redemption was paid in full by the precious blood of the Lamb, Jesus, God's Son.

What wonder and deep contemplation these scenes evoke in our hearts! As you study, don't forget to pause and worship, offering a word of gratitude to Him whose death made eternal life possible for the vilest of sinners. Praise Him! Praise the Lamb that was slain!



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

By reading like accounts of this passage in the other gospels, you can gain a fuller understanding of the deep meaning of Christ's death. Take a few minutes to read the corresponding passages in the other gospels and jot down your thoughts and impressions.

Matthew 27:26–34

Mark 15:16–23

Quotable

*For Jesus, the cross
was not a place
of despair and
defeat but of hope
and victory—the
altar on which
the spotless Lamb
of God would bear
our sins and from
which He declared
His triumphant
words, "It is
finished."*

—Charles R. Swindoll



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Luke 23:23–31

**Observation: Jesus Nearing the Cross**

Observation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process where you identify significant details that help you build a foundation for interpretation. John provided some compelling details in John 19. Using what you know about observing the text, make some notes in the spaces below about *what you see*.

Historical Orientation: How Time and Geography Frame the Story

The biblical writers used details regarding time and place as literary devices to shape meaning and move their narrative forward. In fact, geography as a theme plays a huge role in the unfolding of the entire biblical story—from Genesis to Revelation. It makes sense for us to pay close attention to those markers in the text.

The Importance of Time

According to John 18:28, Jesus' trials began and ended "in the early hours of the morning." Trace the account from John 18:28 to John 19:17. What significant things occurred during this brief span of time?

What happened around the noon hour (John 19:13)?

Meditate for a brief time on all that Jesus had endured to this point. What comes to your mind? What emotions do you feel?



Make some notes about how those thoughts may be incorporated into a lesson or small group Bible study on this passage.

The Significance of Geography

The biblical writers skillfully employed geography to emphasize meaning. Read back through John 19:16–37. Write down all the places and geographic clues John included as he described the scenes.

Orienting yourself geographically is critical for understanding the meaning of a biblical passage. One of the best ways to do that is to consult a Bible atlas or set of maps in your study Bible. Go to the back of your Bible and locate a [map](#) titled “New Testament Jerusalem” or something similar. Spend some time studying the map and locating Herod Antipas’ Palace (right in the middle). Then trace your finger slightly southwest to find Herod’s Palace. This is likely the place John mentioned in John 19:13 . . . “the Stone Pavement” or in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*.



Interpretation: Understanding the Significance of the Trials

Mostly, John 19 provides a record of events that led to the crucifixion of Jesus. John carefully chronicled each agonizing moment of Christ’s suffering all the way to the cross. Let’s look closely at what John desired for us to understand about the significance of His death.

A Scouring of the Victim—John 19:1

Although completely unwarranted, Pilate had Jesus scourged (Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15). There were two kinds of scourging in Jesus’ day: Jewish and Roman. Jewish law specified that the victim could not receive more than forty lashes (Deuteronomy 25:1–3). Roman law was not so humane. A man trained in torture, called a lictor, administered the merciless scourging.



Contemplate the pain and agony Jesus endured because of this violent form of punishment. Why would John include this detail for his readers?

Mocking by the Soldiers—John 19:1–3

Cruel soldiers, who circled around Christ's bloody body like vultures, harassed Him with vile words (Matthew 27:27–31).

Reflect for a few moments on the emotional wounds that can result from verbal abuse or mocking. What emotions come to your mind?

After suffering the violent punishment of the lictor's whip, what must Jesus have felt as He was then pummeled by these vicious verbal attacks?

Walking to the Site—John 19:17

After Pilate pronounced judgment on Jesus, Jesus was led away and carried His own cross to the place of execution (John 19:17). Why is it significant that John included this detail of Jesus carrying His own cross?



What does it indicate about Jesus' willingness to endure this suffering and ultimately death?

Nailing on the Cross—John 19:18–22

Crucifixion was a barbaric form of capital punishment that began in Persia. Criminals were fastened by iron spikes to vertical shafts of wood and suspended above the earth to die from exposure, exhaustion, or suffocation. Death was painfully slow and publicly humiliating.

What images do you have in your mind of Christ's crucifixion based on John's account in John 19:16–37?

Lifted above the earth, Jesus could look down from the cross and see the soldiers gambling for His clothes, unknowingly playing their part in the fulfillment of Scripture (John 19:23–24).

Why is this significant to John's story?

Jesus could also see His mother, Mary, tortured by watching the brutality of her Son's execution. In Jesus' words about His mother which He spoke while hanging on the cross, what do we learn about His thoughts and emotions in those final moments (19:25–27)?



Dying from the Pain—John 19:28–30

Excruciating pain accompanied every upward push for breath and downward release from fatigue. Each movement cut deeper into tendons and raw muscle. And in time, flies and other insects found their way into the open, bleeding wounds. Jesus knew He had accomplished everything the Father had sent Him to do. To fulfill one last prophecy from Scripture (Psalm 69:3, 21), He said:

“I am thirsty.” A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it to his lips. When Jesus had tasted it, he said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:28–30)

Reflect for a moment on the significance of John recording these final, agonizing moments of Jesus’ life. How do you think John must have felt as he watched Jesus die and then later as he wrote down his account of Christ’s death?

What do you believe Jesus meant when He declared “It is finished”?

Dealing with the Body—John 19:31–37

John, the only disciple at the foot of the cross, provided an eyewitness account of what was done with Jesus’ body.

What details of Jesus’ death did John include in verses 31–37 that corroborate His death?



What is the significance of John quoting from Zechariah 12:10 in verse 37?

How does this detail contribute to John's goal of wanting everyone to believe in Jesus as God's Son?



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

By comparing other passages of Scripture with the passage you are studying, you can confirm and verify your interpretation. Often, the New Testament writers would draw upon a passage from the Old Testament to strengthen their theological point.

Read carefully and prayerfully Isaiah 53 in its entirety. As you do, make some notes about what images and descriptions remind you of the scenes and events John described in John 19:16–37. Be as specific as possible.

How does Isaiah's prediction about the suffering of the Messiah help you understand the meaning and significance of John's account?





Application: Jesus Took Our Place

Reflecting on the death of Jesus comforts us with the knowledge that He suffered the penalty of sin so we would be free. Two important applications can be drawn from this study to encourage us in our walk of faith.

1. When we focus on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, we have confidence that our salvation is secure (Hebrews 12:2–3).
2. When we meditate on His suffering and death, we gain a new perspective on our own circumstances and trials. We have hope in Him and find rest from our own weary struggle knowing He has already tread that path for us (1 Peter 2:21).

How does this study of Christ's death give you confidence and hope in light of your circumstances today?



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for sending Your one and only Son, Jesus, to suffer and die in my place. I receive Him as Lord and Savior of my life. Thank You for giving to me His righteousness and offering to me the gift of eternal life in His name. I praise You for His wonderful gift of grace. In Jesus' name, amen.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Death on a Cross

John 19:16–37

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

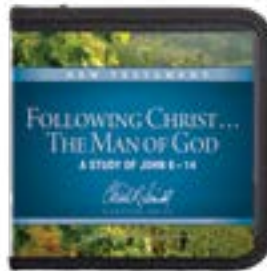
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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

A Miraculous Resurrection

John 19:38–20:10

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

As you begin this study, pause to reflect on what you believe about Jesus' resurrection. Ask yourself a series of questions:

- Do I really believe Jesus was raised from the dead? If so, why?
- Have I ever truly examined the biblical evidence for this crucial doctrine of Christianity?
- How prepared am I to defend the resurrection against skeptics' questions?
- If I do believe, how does Christ's resurrection transform my life?

Thinking through these questions and others will move you to careful reflection of one of John's final scenes from his gospel.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

A fresh reading of a familiar passage of Scripture can help us glean new insights and open our eyes to truths we may have overlooked in the past. Read through John 19:38–20:10 from multiple versions or translations. Once you finish reading, make some notes about what stood out to you.

Now that you've refreshed your thinking about this moving section of John's gospel, you're ready to take a more focused look.

Quotable

Who moved the stone? That's a question that any thinking person must wrestle with. And your answer will affect your whole life.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Observation: The Reality of Christ's Death

Observation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process where you identify significant details that help you build a foundation for interpretation. John carefully presented the evidence of Jesus' physical death with the express purpose of highlighting His miraculous resurrection. Making your way back through the passage, look for John's evidence that Christ died a physical death and was buried in a sealed tomb.

The Certainty of His Death—John 19:32–40

Skeptics of Christ's resurrection lean on the argument that Jesus was not dead when He was placed in the garden tomb. Perhaps He was unconscious or lay in a coma, awaking once in the grave. Yet John's account challenges such claims.

At this point in John's account, Jesus' lifeless body was still hanging on the cross. With the Sabbath approaching, the Jews avoided leaving bodies hanging on crosses during those sacred hours.

What did the soldiers intend to do by breaking the legs of the crucified criminals (John 19:31)?

According to John, why didn't the soldiers break Jesus' legs after doing so to the two criminals (19:33)?

How might the soldiers have concluded that Jesus was already dead?



What did one of the soldiers do next to Jesus' body (John 19:34)?

The fluid that flowed from Jesus' pierced side came out as separated liquid—blood and water. Why is this significant?

Following the confirmation of Jesus' death by the soldiers, John revealed that close companions of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, requested access to His body so they could properly prepare it for burial (19:38–40).

How does John's description of the great care these two men took to prepare Jesus' body provide further evidence that Jesus died?

Describe how Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepared Christ's body to be buried. Be sure to include specific details from John's account in John 19:38–40.



What emotions do you think accompanied their actions as they carefully removed Jesus' body from the cross, lifted Him into their arms, carried Him to a place of preparation, and tenderly cleaned His mangled, lifeless form? Try to describe the scene in your own words.

Having painstakingly prepared the Savior's body for burial, Scripture simply states that, "since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there" (John 19:42). The ordeal was finally over . . . there was a finality to that moment.

The Finality of the Tomb—John 19:41–42

How does the fact that Jesus' body was laid in an empty tomb support the evidence that He did die on the cross?

How do burial ceremonies today signify finality for grieving loved ones who participate in that solemn act?

Why do you think John took such care to chronicle what happened to Jesus' body following His death on the cross?

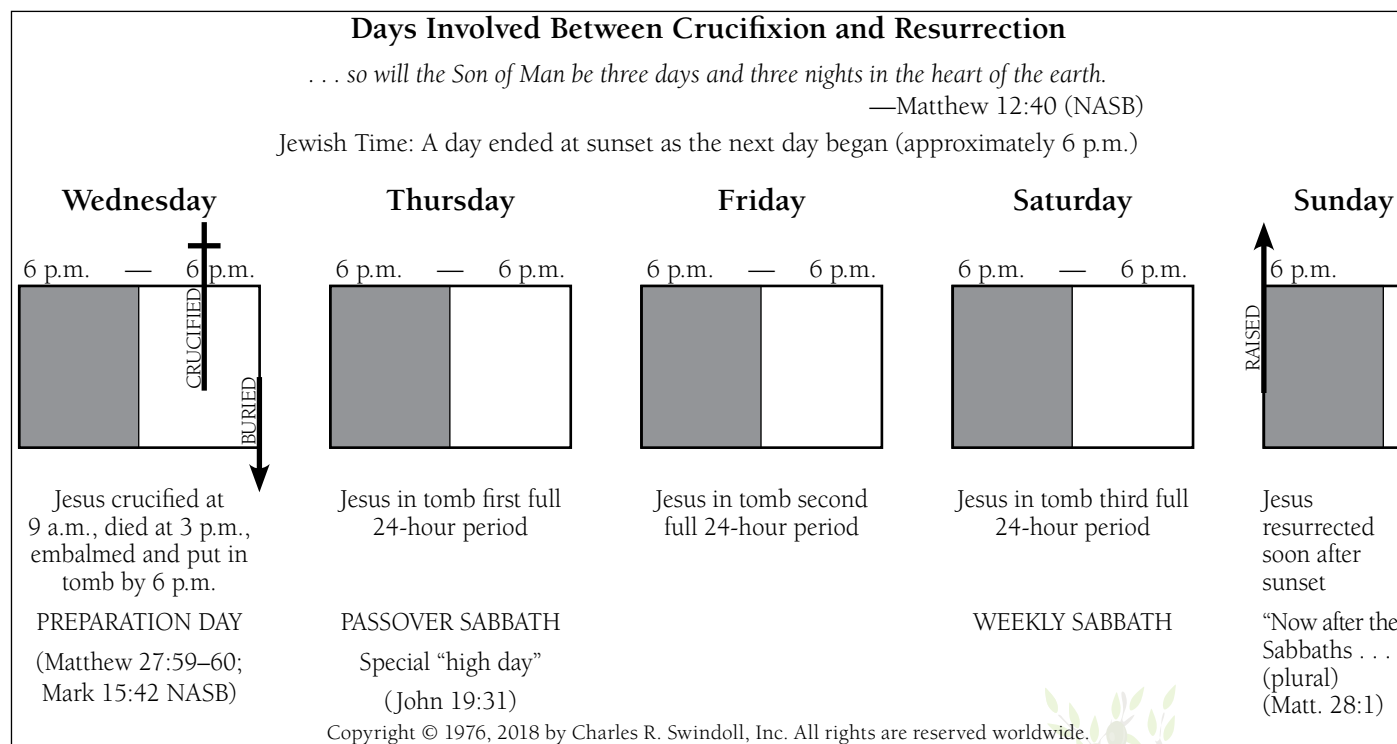




Pausing for Perspective

Many biblical scholars agree that Jesus died and was buried on a Friday. Christian tradition has long observed this understanding by celebrating Christ's death and burial as part of Good Friday services around the world. Chuck Swindoll holds to the view that Christ's death occurred on Wednesday. This view is founded on a literal interpretation of Matthew 12:40 in which Jesus declared, "For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights." While Jews in that day viewed any portion of a day as an entire day, when nights are mentioned in the Bible, mere idiom becomes a literal expression of time. In other words, Jesus would have been in the grave for three entire days and three entire nights, and Friday evening to Sunday morning doesn't calculate.¹

Study Chuck's chart below for further insight into his view of the timeline of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.



John 18 concludes with the grim events surrounding the night of Christ's death. But John opened a window of hope in chapter 19 through which the shining beams of resurrection fill the once dark tomb of grief. Surely, this is what it all means!



Interpretation: The Reality of the Resurrection—John 20:1–10

John carefully walked us through the images of the garden tomb like a tour guide introducing tourists to a fascinating site. By focusing on details, John brought deep meaning to the reality of Christ's resurrection.

The gospel of John states that Mary Magdalene was the first to arrive at the tomb early Easter morning (John 20:1).

What do you think Mary was expecting to see or to experience?

Describe in your own words what happened to Mary. What was her experience according to John 20:1?

What message did Mary relay to the disciples following her experience at the tomb (20:2)?

Once Peter and John arrived at the tomb, what did they do (20:5–8)?



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

A Miraculous Resurrection

John 19:38–20:10

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Notice John's use of the word translated "noticed" or "saw." John used three different Greek words for "noticed" or "saw" in John 20:3–9, each marking a progression from physical to spiritual sight.

John used the Greek word *blepo* when he wrote that John (speaking of himself) "saw the linen wrappings lying there" (John 20:5, emphasis added). John peered into the cave and noticed the linen wrappings but didn't recognize their significance at first.

How would you characterize John's initial observation?

Next came Simon Peter, huffing and puffing from his run and eventually making his way into the tomb. Scripture says that Simon Peter also "saw" the linen wrappings, but this time the Greek word used was *theoreo*, from which is derived the English word *theorize* (20:6).

Peter saw something he wasn't expecting, and it stopped him in his tracks. What might Peter have been theorizing at that point?

Though Peter had a theory, he remained confused about what he was seeing. John, however, was beginning to see the light: he "went in, and he saw and believed—for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead" (20:8–9, emphasis added).

In this instance, John used the Greek word *horao*, meaning "to perceive." That means John got it! The light went on in his head and in his heart, and in his own words, "he believed"!

How does John's progression from physical sight to spiritual understanding help you interpret this passage?



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In a couple of sentences, summarize how you would explain the resurrection to an unbelieving friend or relative.

Even more than the truths surrounding the suffering and death of Jesus, the fact of His resurrection influenced the writings and ministries of New Testament writers. John's firsthand account of Christ's death and resurrection helped fashion the bedrock upon which all New Testament doctrine formed.



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

For every individual confronted with the reality of Christ's resurrection, the evidence must move from the head down to the transforming center of the heart. That is a work of the Holy Spirit. Take some time to examine what the Holy Spirit revealed to other writers of Scripture about what that empty tomb of our risen Savior accomplished and continues to accomplish in peoples' lives. Write your thoughts below each reference.

Acts 13:30–39

Romans 1:1–4

Romans 6:1–14



1 Corinthians 15:50–58

Ephesians 1:18–23

Colossians 2:9–12



Application: Jesus Our Model in Suffering

What glorious transformation awaits everyone who ultimately believes, as John did, the witness of the empty tomb! The shining light of Christ's gospel is the hope of resurrection for all who believe in His name.

Two principles emerge from our study on Christ's miraculous resurrection:

1. *To live without faith in the resurrection is to deny biblical evidence.* John clearly and compellingly laid plain the evidence of both the death and resurrection of Christ. All who read his words must wrestle honestly with it. Do you believe his testimony?
2. *To die without hope of resurrection is to face a barren eternity.* How many people in your life do you know who have yet to hear the witness of God's Word surrounding the resurrection of Jesus? Ask the Lord to deepen your burden for the lost and increase your devotion to praying for those who have yet to believe.





A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for the miracle of Christ's resurrection and for the promise of eternal life in His name. Give me boldness to proclaim the witness of Your Word to those You have brought into my life who don't know You or Your Son. Open their hearts, Father. In Jesus' life-giving name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 65–66.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

A Miraculous Resurrection

John 19:38–20:10

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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Reactions to the Resurrected Lord

John 20:11–31

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Using your imagination is one of the best ways to prepare to search the Scriptures. Imagine for a moment you live in first-century Jerusalem. You are there during the weekend of Jesus' death. As you're walking past the garden tomb where He was buried, you suddenly sense the presence of a person. You're startled to see it's Jesus! What do you feel? What might you say? What do you imagine He would say to you? Describe the encounter in your own words.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Down through the centuries, thoughts and reflections on Christ's resurrection have spawned the composition of hymns of praise, more contemporary worship songs, and even grand symphonic oratorios. Read John 20:11–31 with an attitude of worship. Then write your own worship song or hymn of thanksgiving to God, expressing praise that Jesus is alive!



Observation: The Reality of Christ's Death

Take some time to make basic observations from John 20:11–31. Focus on words, conversations, and any details John provided to add richness to the scenes. In the space below, write down anything that stands out to you as important.

Quotable

*The great news is
Jesus did rise! And
that fact has made
all the difference.
Because He rose,
good overcame
evil, light overtook
darkness, love
overthrew hate, and
life overwhelmed
death.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Under each name below, write down what is unique about the individual's reaction to the empty tomb.

Mary (John 20:2)

Peter (20:6–7)

John (20:8–10)

Encounters with the Risen Christ—Mary Magdalene

The first individual Jesus sought to visit was the grieving Mary Magdalene. We can only imagine the delight He took in turning her sorrow into joy.

What details did John include about where Mary was and her emotional state just prior to encountering Jesus (John 20:11–13)?

What was Mary's assumption regarding Jesus' missing body?



At first, whom did Mary assume she was talking to that morning (John 20:14–15)?

Describe Mary's response after she realized she was speaking with the risen Jesus (20:16–17).

Encounters with the Risen Christ—The Disciples

Abruptly, John cut to another scene. The room was dark, lighted only by an oil lamp. The disciples were huddled together in fear, terrified of what the Jewish officials may have in store for them now that they had eliminated Jesus. But Jesus Himself pierced their gloom.

What details did John include about the setting of the disciples' first encounter with the risen Jesus (John 20:19)?

What did Jesus do to verify for His disciples that it was truly Him standing before them (20:20–23)?

Though John's accounts of the disciples encountering Jesus are chock-full of thrilling details that help build his case for Jesus' resurrection, Thomas' dramatic encounter with the Savior solidifies the meaning behind it all.





Interpretation: The Reality of the Resurrection—John 20:1–10

Often, embedded in the dialogue of a scene are clues for interpretation. That's why, particularly in narrative sections of Scripture, you should pay close attention to what is said by key individuals in the scene.

Thomas has long been considered the “doubting” disciple because of his reluctance to believe Jesus was alive. But John detailed Thomas’ personal encounter with Jesus after the resurrection in which, through a series of interactions with Jesus, his doubt turned to triumphant faith!

Why do you think Thomas had such doubts regarding the resurrection?

How can God use our doubts to begin to lead us to a place of faith?

What proof of His resurrection did Jesus offer to Thomas (John 20:26–28)?

Explain how Thomas’ bold declaration of faith in Jesus helps support John’s stated mission in writing his gospel so “that you may continue to believe” (20:31)?



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Decades after Thomas made his bold statement of faith in Jesus, the apostle Paul stood on Mars Hill in Athens, Greece, before a curious but skeptical audience of philosophers, poets, and intellectuals. This New Testament scene provides a compelling correlation to the truth John revealed in his gospel. Read carefully Paul’s stirring words to this august group of doubters.



“God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man [Jesus] he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30–31)

Thomas struggled with doubt. The skeptics on Mars Hill, according to Paul, were ignorant of truth. But neither was exempt from coming to terms with the clear evidence—the proof—that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.

How does this passage provide you confidence in the resurrection so you can testify to its veracity with certain boldness? In other words, how does Christ’s glorious resurrection strengthen your faith and embolden your witness?



Application: Jesus Our Model in Suffering

How does doubt diminish your ability to trust God for things you cannot see or understand regarding your present circumstances?

How can the truth of the resurrection bring you to a deeper level of trust in God’s power?



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for the miracle of Christ’s resurrection. Thank you for helping me overcome the limitations of my faith—my doubts, my fears, and even my lingering moments of unbelief. Give me greater boldness to believe in Your power and to willingly and passionately share with others the message that Jesus is alive! In the name of the risen Jesus, amen!



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Reactions to the Resurrected Lord

John 20:11–31

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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Coming to Terms with Your Calling

John 21:1–17

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

There is peaceful quietness to any scene by the sea. The story before us is no exception. Jesus had died. His body was placed in a tomb, but mysteriously He left the grave. He is alive! In fact, He appeared to His disciples and made Himself known. Yet He found them back to their old way of life by the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

What a beautiful setting . . . can you imagine it? Put yourself there for a few moments. Breathe in some sea air, feel the cool offshore breeze, smell the waft of seawater and fish, and listen to the seabirds cheeping morning tunes. Enter Jesus, now “standing on the beach.” He went to where the disciples were busy with living, perhaps disillusioned at the seeming sudden loss of their call to ministry.

Can you pause a moment before launching this study and write a prayer thanking Jesus for meeting you where you are today? Thank Him for pursuing you. Worship Him for accepting you and drawing you to Himself.

Quotable

*John, the writer of
this great gospel,
takes us into one
of the most tender,
moving scenes in all
the New Testament
as Jesus Himself
proposes this very
notion to Peter,
asking him, “Do
you love Me?”*

— Charles R. Swindoll



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Read John 20:1–17 in its entirety. As you read, underline in your Bible details about the setting that help you put yourself in the context. This would be a great time to locate a Bible dictionary and look up a couple of terms and phrases John used to refer to the Sea of Galilee and fishing in New Testament



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times. You might also locate Galilee on a Bible map. In the back of your Bible, turn to the map titled *Topography of Palestine* or something similar. Find the Sea of Galilee. In the space provided, make notes about what you discover.



Observation: Jesus' Encounter with the Disciples by the Sea

Observation, the process of looking closely at the details of a passage of Scripture, helps you understand the setting and key ideas. John opened this section with a description of the scene where Jesus reappeared to His disciples, not in Jerusalem but in Galilee.

Who among Jesus' disciples did John place at the scene (John 21:1–2)?

What were the disciples doing when the scene opens (21:3)?

What do you think they were thinking about Jesus at this point?

How long, according to John, had the disciples been out on the water fishing (21:3)?



How did Jesus begin His conversation with the disciples (John 21:5)?

What happened when they followed Jesus' instruction to throw their nets on the other side of the boat (21:6)?

Who first identified the mystery man on the beach as Jesus (21:7)?

What did Peter do when he realized it was Jesus standing on the beach (21:7)?

How does Peter's response compare to other ways in which Peter responded to Jesus in the past? What examples of Peter's impulsive actions can you remember?

Being in the Lord's presence must have brought back to the disciples' minds and hearts His original calling on their lives—to be fishers of men (Mark 1:16–18). How gracious of Jesus to reenter Peter's world, especially since Peter had experienced such a colossal failure in his faith. What followed next reveals the meaning behind John's purpose in including this poignant story.



**Interpretation: Jesus Restores Peter to Ministry—John 21:15–17**

Through tender dialogue (often the seedbed of interpretation!) and gentle questioning, Jesus led Peter down a path to rediscovering not only the purpose of His calling but the motivation behind it: love for His Master.

Read John 21:15–17 and pay close attention to the progression of the conversation. Following breakfast, Jesus turned His line of questioning to Peter directly.

Three times Jesus asked Peter the same question—one question for each time Peter denied Jesus (John 21:15–27). Interestingly, Jesus referred to His faltering disciple as Simon, not Peter, perhaps intentionally bringing Peter back to the day he first followed Jesus (1:40–42).

What was His initial question, and how might it have made Peter feel?

What do you think Jesus meant by the word *these* in verse 15? (HINT: This would be a good time to consult a reliable Bible commentary on John and read about the various possibilities for what Jesus was referring to with *these*. For an online resource, consult Thomas Constable's study notes for John 21:15 at www.planbiblechapel.org/soniclight.) Write down what you discover in the space provided.

The first time Jesus asked Peter, “Do you *love* Me . . .” (21:15) He used the Greek word *agapaō* which is the highest form of love. When Peter responded, however, he used the Greek word *phileō* which was the term for “friendship.”

Peter emphasized his fondness for Jesus while Jesus led the conversation, emphasizing the more intimate expression of love.

Why do you think that's significant? How would you explain the difference in the two Greek words?



The final time Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, He used the word Peter first responded with—*phileō*. Jesus then followed Peter's final response with a command: "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17). Jesus seemed to accept Peter's unwillingness to express the deepest level of devotion to Him. Nevertheless, Peter's response was enough to warrant a restoration to His calling: to tend the Savior's sheep.

What does Jesus' response reveal about Peter's level of devotion at that point?

What does Jesus' willingness to restore Peter reveal of His grace and mercy?

Long after the breakfast with Jesus on the shores of Galilee, Peter rose during Pentecost in Jerusalem to preach a powerful message of Christ's offer of salvation. Peter became a pillar of the early church, and he later wrote two letters to believers facing persecution and who were scattered throughout Asia Minor because of their faith. His words reflect a lifelong devotion to Jesus and a commitment to follow Christ's command to care for His sheep.



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process that uses related passages of Scripture to support your interpretation. Peter's words in his letter to suffering Christians highlight that once Peter came to terms with his calling, he remained steadfast even to the end:

So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. (1 Peter 1:6–7)





Application: Coming to Terms with *Your* Calling

Chuck closed his message from John 21 with three applications worth considering:

1. *Coming to terms with your calling means coming to a realistic admission regarding your work.* In what ways can you express your devotion to Jesus through your vocation or what you do each day?
2. *Coming to terms with your calling includes an honest evaluation of your priorities.* How can the way you spend your time reflect your priority to follow Jesus? In what ways do you think your priorities may not reflect your desire to follow Christ?
3. *Coming to terms with your calling doesn't require absolute perfection in your life.* In what areas of your life do you feel you are being too hard on yourself? How does your tendency toward perfectionism hinder your ability to experience joy and freedom in Christ?



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for the grace and mercy You show me in Jesus. Show me how to be patient with myself as I strive to express my devotion to Your Son, Jesus Christ. And show me ways to extend to others who need encouragement the same mercy and patience You've shown me. In Jesus' name, amen!



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Coming to Terms with Your Calling

John 21:1–17

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

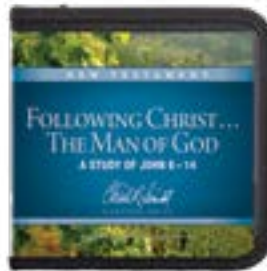
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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

“ . . . And What about This Man?”

John 21:17–23

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Often, one of the most impactful parts of a written work is the epilogue—the closing thoughts that summarize what has been previously declared. John 21 provides just such a powerful closing word from John, who personally (and intimately) reflected on Peter's colossal failure and subsequent return to Jesus.

Yet, the apostle John pointed out that Peter still faltered, focusing on his doubts rather than his faith. What things in your life cause you at times to falter and doubt what you once firmly believed? Take a moment to ask the Lord to gently and graciously remind you again of your great salvation. Ask Him to remove your doubts and replace them with trust.

Quotable

*God doesn't save us,
nor deal with us,
nor will He reward
us on a comparative
basis—He relates
to us individually,
one on one.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

John 21 forms an epilogue to John's gospel. And like any well-written ending, it is full of rich meaning. In each section—loving and serving (John 21:17), living and dying (21:18–19), lingering and following (21:19–23)—we see that Jesus taught Peter a significant lesson the disciple needed to learn.



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Observation: Jesus' Encounter with the Disciples by the Sea

Observation, the process of looking closely at the details of a passage of Scripture, helps you start to understand the setting and key ideas. In the following sections, we'll observe how Jesus drew in close to Peter and helped him understand his personal need to focus his priority on following his Lord.

Loving and Serving—John 21:17

In John 21:17, Jesus asked Peter one final time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” What was Peter's reaction to this third question? What emotion did Peter feel?

Jesus made a clear connection between Peter's devotion to Him and his new mission in life. What was that connection?

Living and Dying—John 21:18–19

As Jesus continued to speak intimately with Peter, He revealed to him something significant about his future. What did Jesus reveal?



What contrast did Jesus use to illustrate the cost of Peter’s following Him?

Why did Jesus use the illustration contrasting Peter’s youth with his older years? What did Jesus say would be the ultimate purpose of Peter’s death?



Interpretation: Linger and Following—John 21:19–23

In this final, intimate encounter with Jesus, Peter is forced to decide if he’s willing to go to the next level in his relationship with his Savior. Bible scholar and commentator Dr. Hall Harris brings a helpful perspective to the significance of this final conversation between Jesus and Peter:

After these words to Peter concerning his martyrdom, Jesus said to him in summary, “Follow me.” Peter was to follow Jesus first in discipleship and later in death, as Jesus had just foretold.¹

Read back through John 21:18–22. Jesus seemed to be inviting Peter into a deeper commitment and focus in this conversation. What do you think Jesus had in mind for Peter?



Jesus was urging Peter toward a continual, unswerving commitment to follow Him. Why did Peter’s question about John evoke such a strong response from Jesus?



Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process that uses related passages of Scripture to support your interpretation. John wasn’t the only New Testament writer who held a deep conviction about the significance of sacrifice in following Christ; dying to self and proclaiming the power of the cross became a foundation for Paul’s preaching too:

For Christ didn’t send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.
(1 Corinthians 1:17–18)

In what ways does Paul’s emphasis on the power of Christ’s crucifixion help us understand the meaning of His conversation with Peter about following Him even to the point of death?

How can the reality of the cross lose its power in our lives when we insist on looking back and worrying about our past failure as Peter did?



How does our continually dying to ourselves unleash the power of Christ in our lives?

Why does dying to our own will and selfish ambition appear as foolishness to those who don't believe (1 Corinthians 1:18)?



Application: Moving Forward in Forgiveness and Grace

John's epilogue about Jesus' final conversation with Peter reveals several important applications for all believers.

1. *Past failures can be forgiven in love . . . so don't quit.* How often do we allow our failures to hinder us from experiencing the freedom in Christ to serve Him in the future? What about your past is keeping you from serving Jesus in freedom and joy? How can you allow His gracious love and forgiveness to set you free?
2. *Present lifestyle is no guarantee of the future . . . so don't predict.* Could there be ways you are presuming on the Lord and on your future based on what you are experiencing today? How might you view your future with a more Christ-honoring attitude?



3. *Personal obedience is an individual matter . . . so don't compare.* Like Peter, perhaps you're more concerned about someone else's level of obedience than your own. Are you struggling with jealousy or envy regarding someone's success? Is your focus on someone else's lack of commitment keeping you from committing to what Christ is calling you to do? Write your thoughts here.

4. *People will understand God's message . . . so don't be afraid.* Often our fear of the response of others to the gospel keeps us from sharing it freely. Do you feel afraid to share what you believe? Are you resisting sharing your commitment to follow Jesus with your family because you fear their response? Ask the Lord for boldness and to open the hearts of those who need to hear of His grace. Close your study by writing a prayer to the Lord as if He had been addressing you as He addressed Peter.



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for gently reminding me that my obedience is between You and Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me decide each day to take up my cross and follow Him with passion and resolve. Don't let me waver. Deliver me from fear and doubt. In Jesus' powerful name, amen!

ENDNOTE

1. "Exegetical Commentary on John 21," *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Bible.org, accessed August 31, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/exegetical-commentary-john-21>.



EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

“ . . . And What about This Man?”

John 21:17–23

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EXALTING CHRIST . . . THE LAMB OF GOD

Many Other Signs . . . Many Other Things

John 20:30–31; 21:24–25

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

By the time John wrote his gospel, the end of the first century was near. Some sixty years passed since Jesus died—a long time to linger over the memories of His life. With an eye for specific details that would substantiate his purpose, John selected just the right scenes to include in his magnificent biography of Jesus. As you reflect on this great story John authored, what scenes are most powerful to you personally?

Quotable

Now we've reached the end—the final study of the most remarkable life that ever cast a shadow on the landscape of history: Jesus, the exalted Lamb of God.”

— Charles R. Swindoll



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Take a few moments to return to the opening scenes from John's gospel. Slowly skim through the gospel, pausing at spots where perhaps you underlined a line or word to consider its significance. You may even review some of your *Searching the Scriptures* lessons. Pause and thank the Lord for speaking to you through this moving study.



Observation: The Signs He Performed

Observation, the process of looking closely at the details of a passage of Scripture, helps you start to understand the setting and key ideas. John clearly stated that he wrote his gospel with one overarching goal: “that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name” (John 20:31).



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Sign #1: Jesus, Master over Quality

John began his gospel with some very compelling miracles or “signs,” as he refers to them. The first scene is the wedding at [Cana](#) in John 2:1–11. Reread that section. What miracle or sign did Jesus perform?

Who was there to witness this sign?

According to John, what did this sign reveal about Jesus (John 2:11)?

Sign #2: Jesus, Master over Distance

The second sign John included involved the healing of the official’s son (John 4:46–54). What is unique about this sign, particularly related to Jesus’ proximity to the miracle?

How many people were impacted by this sign according to John’s account?

How did the official and his family respond to this sign (4:53)?



Sign #3: Jesus, Master over Time

The third sign involved the healing of a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years (John 5:1–9). Where did Jesus perform this sign?

What was significant about the period during which Jesus performed this sign?

What was the question Jesus asked the man (5:6)?

Sign #4: Jesus, Master over Quantity and Size

The fourth sign involved Jesus feeding a multitude of people with only a small helping of food (John 6:1–14). Where did this sign take place?

Who would have witnessed this sign and benefited from it?

What details did John include to help you understand the significance of this sign?



Sign #5: Jesus, Master over Nature

This sign occurred on the Sea of Galilee where Jesus miraculously walked on water (John 6:16–21). What details did John include about the reaction of the disciples to Jesus' approach?

What happened once the disciples invited Jesus into the boat?

Sign #6: Jesus, Master over Misfortune

This sign involved Jesus healing a blind man (John 9:1–7). How long had the man Jesus healed been blind?

What reason did Jesus give His disciples for why this man had to endure his affliction?

Sign #7: Jesus, Master over Death

Perhaps the greatest sign of them all involved Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11). Where did Jesus perform this sign?



Why is this sign the apex of all those Jesus performed?

By highlighting these remarkable events in Jesus' ministry, John moved his readers to a place of decision: Believe and receive, or don't believe and reject the offer of Jesus.



Interpretation: The Things Jesus Did

To move his readers to that place of decision, John concluded his gospel with a compelling summary statement:

This disciple is the one who testifies to these events and has recorded them here. And we know that his account of these things is accurate. Jesus also did many other things. If they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written. (John 21:24–25)

What do you think John meant when, referring to himself, he wrote, “This disciple is the one who testifies to these events” (21:24)?

Each of the disciples, following Christ's ascension, made a significant impact on the life and growth of the early church. And each died a martyr's death. The resurrected Savior and divine enablement at Pentecost (Acts 2) moved them to spend the remaining portion of their lives proclaiming the gospel to far and distant lands and ultimately to give their lives in His name. That's why John boldly declared that the signs and miracles of Jesus could never be contained in all the books that could be written, past or future.

In his message, Chuck Swindoll stated that “in each of the seven miracles, Jesus demonstrated absolute control over factors of life with which humans are unable to cope or to control.” John presented Jesus as the supernatural answer to all of life's greatest needs and ills, and He met all of our needs in becoming human Himself.

Yet the miracles and stories of Jesus' life and ministry are not confined to the Gospels—they are, in fact, applied by the apostles to the subsequent writings of the New Testament. In these letters, we see the miracle of Christ's power applied in the life and growth of the church.





Correlation: How Does It Relate?

Correlation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process that uses related passages of Scripture to support your interpretation. Read each passage below and write a summary sentence explaining the verse's relationship to John's passion for spurring people toward belief.

Acts 2:40–41

Acts 3:1–8

Acts 16:31



Application: Facing *Your* Impossibility with Jesus

Chuck closed his message from John 21 with two compelling and personal applications:

1. *The best training ground for your faith is the realm of human impossibility.* What are you facing today that can only be resolved if Christ intervenes and demonstrates His power?



2. *The only solution for your impossibility is divine intervention.* What attitude or obstacle is preventing you from bringing your impossibility to Jesus? What would it take for you to fully surrender to Him?



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for making it possible for John to experience everything he needed to write this great gospel! Thank you for making it plain that You sent Your Son, the exalted Lamb of God, to take away my sin. I praise You for this gift . . . and from this time forth, I devote my life to serving Christ and proclaiming His message of grace and love. In Jesus' exalted name, amen.



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