

# **BELIEVE**

## **The Gospel of John**

While all Scripture is inspired by God, few books in the Bible have had more impact on people than the Gospel of John. On one hand, John has been given to countless skeptics and unbelievers exploring Christianity. Bible societies often translate and publish John first when putting the Bible into a new language so that the text of this wonderful work can be given to people who have never heard of Jesus or know little of Him. As a book, it may be the most important evangelistic tool God has given us, and countless have come to faith in Jesus after reading the story revealing the identity and mission of Jesus. On the other hand, there are discussions in John that take us to the deep end of the theological pool, and have been instrumental in shaping the core beliefs about Jesus throughout the ages. John gives us vital material to understand both the full humanity and full deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as an explanation of Jesus' place within the Trinity. Jesus is God, but also submissive to the will of His Father. Furthermore, Jesus tells His disciples that He and His Father will send the Spirit to them. In the end, John has a simple message, that Jesus is the Christ and those who believe in Him will have life. Yet there are depths explained in John that are deeper than the whole of human understanding and only eternity will let us understand fully what we get glimpses of in John's story.

Starting in September, 2016, Genesis will be doing a sermon series preaching this entire book. This series will take us a while as we preach through the amazing stories, rich teaching, and beautiful snapshots of Jesus. It is our hope that those attending each week will leave with a better understanding of the person, work, and mission of Jesus and have a richer understanding of what it means to believe in Him.

### **One Gospel, Four Gospels**

The first four books of the New Testament are called the four Gospels. Each of these four books tells in story form about the life of Jesus. The goal of the Gospel writers was to show Jesus in His glory to convince their hearers that He was Israel's long awaited Messiah and the Savior for the whole world. Each of these authors write their material to specific hearers at specific First Century moments in specific places. So the way they present their stories differs. Matthew is trying to convince Jews that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah. Mark is actually passing Peter's preaching on Jesus to people living in Rome. Luke gives a researched and detailed historical account of Jesus' life in order to affirm things his hearer, a man named Theophilus, had heard. We will spend much of the rest of this document explaining John's purpose and audience. The key thing here is to realize a couple things about the four accounts and their place in the whole of Scripture.

First, while there are four Gospel accounts, there is only one Gospel. The Gospel is the story of God's salvation secured for us in the life, death, and resurrection

of Christ, who died as a substitute for us taking God's wrath for our sin and providing redemption through faith in Christ alone. This is the Gospel. The author of the four accounts are not giving us four Gospels, but are telling the story of the One True Gospel from four perspectives. So each Gospel account has sufficient information about Jesus for us to know His life, mission, and redemption. Each account stands alone and is sufficient for our salvation. And the stories are complementary not competitive. While they may contain different individual stories, and sometimes even different perspectives on the same moments, they are not telling us different stories. Furthermore, all of the Gospel accounts know that Christ is the fulfillment of the entire story of the Bible and the pinnacle of God's redemption plan. And each account makes the purpose of Christ evident early in their account pointing to the cross, and then spends a considerable amount of the story telling us about the trials, suffering, crucifixion and death of Jesus. So, while they have different perspectives and are seeking to reach a different group of people, they are not sharing four different Gospels, but the One True Gospel in four accounts. And the goal of each of these books is to show us Jesus in order that we might see His glory and come to saving faith in Christ.

Yet, John's Gospel account stands in contrast somewhat to the other three. The first three (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are called the Synoptics, because the approach to these versions is a story driven, fast-paced account where the authors are focusing primarily on events. John on the other hand focuses more on the deeper meaning of the stories, giving us much more teaching and much more information about the identity of Jesus. An illustration here. The four Gospels can be compared to our TV news sources. The Synoptics are similar to the Network Evening News, programs that have aired at 5:30 PM for decades. The evening news anchors were in past years some of the best known and most deeply trusted people in our country. They have 30 minutes to tell us all of the news for the day (actually it more like 22 minutes minus commercials), so they have to keep the pace moving and keep the news story focused. Even the biggest stories will only get a couple minutes, focusing mostly on the story, with very little commentary. This is the format of the first three Gospel accounts, they are story driven, fast-paced, and don't give a lot of commentary on what the story shows us about the identity of Jesus. John's Gospel, on the other hand, is more like a cable news network (IE-Fox News, CNN, MSNBC). Rather than having 30 minutes, they have all day. So a story that might get two or three minutes on the Evening News will get half hour segments on cable news. They will tell the story, but then there is a bunch of commentary, seeking to help us understand the deeper meaning. We will get experts, a panel discussion, a debate from a Democrat and a Republican... The focus here is not only on the story, but on seeking to reveal the deeper meaning. This is John's approach. For example, Mark is a much shorter account, yet he tells us at least 19 miracle stories. John on the other hand only tells us about seven miracles, yet in each case John connects the miracle story to a much deeper meaning. So when Jesus heals a blind man he connects this event to Jesus being the Light of the World. We should be thankful that the Holy Spirit inspired John to write and record his Gospel, because from his pen we get some of the richest and most meaningful passages on the identity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **The Author - the Apostle John**

The consistent testimony from both the external witness of the early church and the internal testimony of the book itself points to the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee and brother of James as the author of this book. On one hand, the book is anonymous, as it does not have a byline. Yet, John 20:21-24 identifies a person known in the book as “The disciple whom Jesus loved,” as the author. We know from the book that this person was one of the 12 disciples called by Jesus, and other stories using this interesting self-designation show us that the author is none other than John.

What an interesting way to describe himself, *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. Sounds kind of arrogant, doesn't it. “Jesus love me, not so sure about you, but I was his favorite.” I don't think this is the heart of John here. I think he uses this title for himself in this book in great humility. I think John is literally saying, “Jesus loved me. I still can't believe it. I am a hot mess, but Jesus loved me. Not because of me, in spite of me, Jesus loved me.” I think John is still in awe of the love of Jesus. As John writes this work, whenever he includes himself in the story he shows himself to be a person in need of a redeemer. Furthermore, John never mentions himself by name with the exception of including his name in the list of the Apostles.

What we learn about John is that he was the son of Zebedee and part of his family fishing business. He grew up in the same region as Jesus, and as a very young man Jesus called him to leave everything and follow, which he did, along with his brother James, and two partners Andrew and Peter. He spent the next three years following Jesus as his rabbi. But several stories show us that he was also part of an inner-circle that included Peter, James, and John. So these three men were probably the closest friends Jesus had on the earth, and there is some evidence that John may have been the closest to Jesus of these three.

By the writing of this book John has aged. It has probably been 40-60 years since the death of Jesus, and now as an old man who has been telling people about Jesus as His Savior for decades. He has left Jerusalem and is probably writing from Ephesus, a major Roman city in Asia Minor, which is in modern day Turkey. It is his desire to make sure his story of Jesus outlives him, and he desires to see people come to know His best friend and believe in Him. So John writes, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a truthful and accurate account of the Gospel. This is one of five inspired books written by John to the churches in this region, the Gospel, the letters of 1, 2, and 3 John, and the book of Revelation.

## **Audience & Time of the Book**

There are differences of opinion among scholars on this question, but the most supported answer is that John wrote the book from Ephesus somewhere between 80-95 AD. Several reasons for this. First, there is some language in the book that fits a time frame of after 70 AD. That year is significant in understanding the story of Jewish history as Rome conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the city and Temple. John calls the Sea of Galilee the Sea of Tiberias, a name only used late in the first century, and he gives a reference to Peter's martyrdom which happened shortly before 70 AD. John also does not reference the Sadducees, the Jewish leaders who had oversight of the Temple during Jesus' lifetime. This group dropped out of existence after the destruction of Jerusalem. They are key players in the other Gospel accounts, but are

not mention in John, and the most likely explanation is that John is writing later in the first century. On the other hand, the sect of the Pharisees has become even more important and powerful among Jewish people as they reshaped Judaism in the post 70 AD period. Furthermore, John seems to be addressing issues that have developed later rather than earlier. Furthermore, his other works are addressed to people living in Asia Minor (See Revelation 1-2 and the Seven Churches of Revelation).

Ephesus is a major city in the Roman Empire, the hub city of Asia Minor. The Apostle Paul planted the church there around 52 AD and then returned there a couple years later and spent over 3 years. Church history tells us that John came to Ephesus near the end of his life and served the church there and other churches in the region. At this time he was the last remaining living Apostle, so his words are important. The city of Ephesus was a landing place for many Jews who scattered from Israel during periods of persecution, including the destruction in 70. It is also a city in the Roman Empire. And the church there is made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers.

### **Purpose**

John definitely listened and learned in his college freshman writing class. On day one of a good writing class students should learn how to write good thesis statements that lay out the purpose of a work clearly. In all of John's works he writes with incredibly clear thesis statements. For his Gospel he lays this out in John 20:30-31:

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Simply put, John tells us that it is his desire that the readers of this Gospel come to realize that the Christ, the Son of God is none other than Jesus himself. It is his desire to introduce us to the Jesus he knows, and pass on his life and identity in a way that we will clearly see that Jesus was, in his humanity, the one who had been promised for centuries by the prophets. By telling us that Jesus is the Christ John is connecting Him to the huge metanarrative of the Bible, the grand story of God's redemption. All throughout the Old Testament God promised that He would send a single person who is the Anointed One (this is what Christ, which is the Greek word for Messiah means) who would be the True King to rule God's Kingdom, ultimate prophet who is the very revelation of God, and Great High Priest who would bring the perfect sacrifice for sin. John want us to know that Jesus is the Christ. John also wants us to know that Jesus is the Son of God. This is a reference to Jesus' divinity, his True Identity. Jesus was a man who lived in history, and John clearly shows the humanity of Jesus. But this man always has been and always will be God, a member of the Trinity.

John then says that as a result of knowing this truth, it is his desire that we believe. More on this word a little later, but John is not just giving us information about Jesus, he has a goal. And that goal is that you and I come to truly believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. As a result, those who believe and continually believe will experience the full, abundant life promised in Christ. They will be connected to Jesus Christ, the creator of life and the source of life. By rightly believing in Jesus we will

experience life as God intended, the life of God in our broken and hopeless lives. This is John's stated purpose.

With this in mind, I believe there are three reasons John wrote this Gospel, or rather, there are three issues John is seeking to address with his Gospel that have arisen in the late first century. John probably knows that he is the last living Apostle entrusted with the authority of Christ to pass on Jesus' teaching and mission. And in the last decades of the first century some things are affecting the way early Christians are hearing and interacting with the Gospel. I believe this is the reason for a different type of Gospel. By this time the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke (along with Acts), have been written and are being circulated and read. But there are some pressures that are swaying the way some are reading these stories, and John writes his Gospel to give clarity to some issues that are leading people away from the True Jesus.

First, with the fall of Jerusalem there has been a fairly distinct divide between Christianity and Judaism. Yet, the early churches have Jewish Christians. Christianity began as a Jewish movement starting in Jerusalem. For the first decades the majority of those believing in Jesus were Jewish, including John himself and all of the Apostles and the Apostle Paul. The early church faced a dilemma when Gentiles received the Holy Spirit and non-Jews began coming into the family of faith. The surrounding questions about this reached a pinnacle in Acts 15 at the Jerusalem Council, where the Apostles and early church leaders discussed the question of how Jewish did Gentile Christians have to become. The answer clearly was that God was reaching the nations, and Gentiles did not have to become Jewish in order to follow Jesus. This never sat well with those who wanted Christianity to be an extension of Judaism. From the beginning of Christianity as a movement, the Jewish establishment persecuted those who followed Jesus as their Messiah. The embracing of Gentiles into the household of faith gave another reason to harass and persecute Jewish Christians. A second wedge that started driving Jews and early Christians apart were a series of persecutions in the Roman Empire under the reign of Nero. This came to a climax in 70 AD, as Christianity and Judaism were split. This did leave Jewish people who had become believers of Jesus in a difficult place as their national and ethnic identity were now in conflict with their faith in Jesus as Jewish converts to Christianity were completely ostracized from the Jewish community, thrown out of synagogues, and cut off from families. John's Gospel is direct as he discusses "the Jews", which is basically a designation of the establishment within Jewish religion and often a reference specifically to the sect of the Pharisees (see note above), and Jesus' words with these people are not gentle. John's style is very Jewish, and he shows some very positive things about Jewish culture and life, but he also shows a vehement conflict between "the Jews" and Jesus. John wants his Jewish readers to know that it is Jesus who is the culmination of God's great work and not the Jewish establishment that has rejected Christ and at the time of his writing has absolutely separated themselves from Christianity and are persecuting Jews who believe.

The second issue is one of doctrine brought on by a false teaching that is starting to arise, coming from the Greco-Roman world. Gnosticism was a spirituality that was connected to the ideas flowing from Greek philosophy and thought. While it was not primarily a spirituality connected to Christianity, there were some who were pulling the historical Jesus and recasting Him as the hero of Gnostic thought. The

name Gnosticism comes from the Greek word “gnosis” which means knowledge and is a reference to salvation by secret knowledge only available by those in Gnostic gatherings.

**GNOSTICISM - A religious system that sought to mix religious ideas with popular Greek philosophy and embraced salvation by secret knowledge. They believed that the material world was evil and immaterial world was good (Platonic), and therefore the soul was enslaved in the body. Gnosticism latched on to Jesus as a hero, but embraced him as God while rejecting the humanity of Jesus, and his death.**

Gnostics created secret societies and sought to draw people in with their secret knowledge. There were two ways Gnostics hijacked Jesus’ identity. Some pointed to the story of Jesus as nothing more than an illusion, that Jesus was always purely God who created appearances of being in the flesh, but that this was not real. His death pictures what release from the physical world and salvation would look like. The other approach was to see the Christ as a spiritual identity that found a Jewish peasant who was worthy and at his baptism rested the spirit of Christ on Jesus the man. It was this spirit of the Christ that is the focus in Jesus’ ministry. But knowing that the spirit of Christ cannot die, right before the crucifixion the spirit of the Christ left the man Jesus. Weird, I know, but the key here is that people were seeking release from suffering from the fate of their lives, the hardship of the world, and the oppression of injustice. So they recast Jesus to be the hero of this worldview. In John’s writings he is combating this and clearly showing Jesus as one man with two natures, that of God and of man. This is a mystery, but He is not pure spirit, but rather a whole person. John tells us that the Word became flesh, refuting any idea that the Word merely settled on flesh. And finally, John shows us that salvation is not found in being released from the physical world, but salvation happens in resurrection and the restoration of the created order. We should be thankful that God allowed John to live so long and that he wrote to address the questions arising out of this heresy, because the identity of Jesus as revealed in John’s Gospel is clear, and the content of this book was used for centuries to refute future Gnostic heretics including people like Marcion and Arius.

Third, John writes at a time when Christianity is facing a significant persecution. The Roman Emperor Domitian has a growing hostility toward followers of Jesus. John is letting those who believe in Jesus know that it is worth it to trust Christ. Even if their temporal lives are wrecked and taken, the true life they have in Christ because of the Gospel cannot be taken.

### **Outline**

This is a simple outline of John’s Gospel from the *ESV Study Bible*.

- I. Prologue: The Incarnate Word (1:1–18)
- II. The Signs of the Messiah (1:19–12:50)
  - A. John the Baptist’s witness and the first week of Jesus’ ministry (1:19–2:11)

- B. Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to Gentiles (2:12–4:54)
  - C. Mounting Jewish opposition, additional signs (5:1–10:42)
  - D. The final Passover: the ultimate sign and the aftermath (11:1–12:19)
  - E. The approaching Gentiles and the Messiah's rejection by the Jews (12:20–50)
- III. The Farewell Discourse and the Passion Narrative (13:1–20:31)
- A. The cleansing and instruction of the new messianic community and Jesus' final prayer(13:1–17:26)
  - B. Jesus' arrest, trials, death, and burial (18:1–19:42)
  - C. Jesus' resurrection, appearances, and sending of his disciples (20:1–29)
  - D. Purpose statement: Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (20:30–31)
- IV. Epilogue: The Roles of Peter and of the Disciple Whom Jesus Loved (21:1–25)<sup>1</sup>

### **Themes**

In his Gospel, John masterfully weaves several deep and beautiful themes throughout the book. In these themes John acts as a tour guide taking us into the deep end of understanding about the nature and identity of Jesus as revealed in His earthly ministry.

#### ***\*Jesus as God in the Flesh***

John opens this theme with the first words of the Gospel, declaring that “The Word was with God and the Word was God,” and then elaborating by telling us that everything that exists was created through and by Him. So Jesus is God, and 1:14 tells us that the Word became flesh and set up shop among us. God became a man. The entire book is designed to show the amazing identity of Jesus, the man who is God, the God who became a man.

One of the intriguing ways John shows this identity is through the “I Am” statements made by Christ Himself. Seven times Jesus uses the language of “I Am” to reveal aspects of his divine identity.

- The bread of life (John 6:35)
- The light of the world (John 8:12)
- The gate (John 10:9)
- The good shepherd (John 10:11)
- The resurrection and the life (John 11:25)
- The way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)
- The true vine (John 15:1)

These titles are substantial in and of themselves, and during the series we will have sermons on the meaning. But what I want to point out here is that there is a rhythm in Jesus' self-identification that is connected to something much larger than Jesus saying He is a shepherd, gate, and grape vine. The language here is connected to something

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<sup>1</sup>ESV Study Bible, Crossway Publishers, 2008.

rich and deep from the Old Testament. In Exodus 3, Moses has an incredible encounter with God, an event theologians call a “theophany” (meaning appearance of God). Theophanies are moments where God appears in tangible ways to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways. In this story Moses encounters God who appears in a burning bush that is not consumed, and God calls Moses to be the leader of His people as God delivers them from slavery. Moses is unsure of both himself and God at this moment, and has lots of questions and doubts about this plan. One of the questions Moses asks is the identity of God. “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of our fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”<sup>2</sup> God responds by telling Moses, “I AM who I AM,” and then tells Moses that the covenant name for God throughout the generations will be “I AM”. The name for God Jehovah or Yahweh come from this story and are used throughout the Old Testament referring to God in covenant relationship with His people. He is the Great I Am, the self-existing God who is also the one who is whatever His people need in their moment of struggle. So this name is used of God in many passages as God acts for His people, and they give God a new name based on His acts. He is called Jehovah Jireh, which means God who is I Am the provider. God is identified as Jehovah Rophe, which means “God who is I am the shepherd.” This is repeated multiple times as the name of God, Jehovah is attached to his activity which shows God as the answer for all of His people’s question and struggle.

So Jesus comes along and starts using the same kind of language. He heals a blind man and declares of Himself, “I am the light of the world.” By using this language, Jesus is intentionally connecting Himself with Jehovah. But this language becomes even clearer on four occasions when people directly confront him about His identity, and Jesus answers “I AM.” He doesn’t fill in the blank, he just says, “I AM”. The clearest example is in John 8 where the Jews are confronting Jesus. Jesus told them that Abraham was actually looking forward to the day of Jesus’ birth and ministry. They think Jesus is being ridiculous and say, Dude, you are not even fifty years old. Our faith is tied to our father Abraham who lived over 1500 years ago. How could he have been looking to you. Jesus answer is profound, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”<sup>3</sup> Don’t miss this, the implication is clear. Jesus is using the name God gave to Moses to identify Himself. It was as if Jesus was looking at this band of Jewish leaders and saying, “Hey guys, you know the story of Moses, the burning bush, the Exodus, that whole thing. You know that voice speaking out of the bush? Guys, that was me, I was in the bush.” Lest you think I am overreaching this, the next verse is clear that the people who heard him understood it this way as well. The argument was over, they picked up rocks to stone Jesus to death. He had claimed to be God, which was blasphemy (unless of course, you are God).

### **\*Signs**

John only gives us seven miracle stories, and he never calls them miracles. Rather, he uses the language of “signs”, and this language is important. A sign is something that

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<sup>2</sup>Exodus 3:13, ESV.

<sup>3</sup>John 8:58, ESV.



points to something else, normally something greater. Think of a Stop Sign. Truth is that this is nothing more than a octagon shaped piece of metal painted red and standing on a pole. Nothing more. But as a sign it points to a greater reality, a greater authority, and so we stop. For some it is a safety thing, but most of the time we stop because we know the sign points to a law that just might be enforced if we choose to take a path through the intersection without coming to a stop. The signs in John's Gospel work the same way. Each sign miracle is amazing in and of itself, but John also draws out a deeper, profound meaning from each sign that shows us key aspects to Jesus' identity. As you read John, don't stop at the miracle, see if you can find out what the miracle points us toward.

### ***\*Life and Light***

These are interesting motifs threaded throughout John. In the prologue we are told that in Him (Jesus) was life, and the life is the light of men. Life, for John, is more than just being alive. It does refer to eternal life, as pointed out in John 3:16. But it also refers to quality and depth of life. Our problem is that we have been disconnected to the author of life because of our sin. So while we are alive in one sense, in another totally different sense we are dead. But Christ came so that we could have life and have life in an abundant rich way.

Light is used in almost all cultures as a reference to spiritual illumination, the ability to see and navigate life in wisdom and hope. But most see light coming through a philosophical or religious system to be obeyed and applied. John tells us that life is found in a person, and we experience that life when we believe in Christ rather than by a system.

### ***\*Believe***

I've already mentioned that John wrote his Gospel so that we would believe. This is emphasized in the key verse, John 3:16, "whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John uses the noun form (faith or belief) and verbal form (believe, believing) of the Greek word *Pisteo* right at 100 times. The word is important in this story and key to understanding John's Gospel. He wants us to believe, but we must ask ourselves, what does it mean to believe. The truth is that John toys with this word. Sometimes people who "believe" in Jesus, don't actually believe. As the story goes forward their actions and response to Jesus teaching show us that there is something flawed or incomplete in their faith. A couple examples. In John 2:23-24 we learn that many were believing in Jesus because of his signs, but Jesus did not entrust himself to them because he knew what was in their hearts. In other words, they believe in the Jesus who did miracles, but their faith was not a true and saving faith because it was based on the show and not on the cost of following Christ. In John 8 the text tells us that Jesus is talking to people who had believed in Him, but by the end of the chapter these same people are picking up rocks to kill Jesus. Not the epitome of what the Bible is pursuing in us when it calls us to believe. The text tells us of people who believe in Jesus, yet in the end we see that they really don't believe. The story also shows us other people whose lives are demonstrably changed by the power of the Gospel, and while not specifically saying they believe, we learn these people eventually come to a true and saving faith in Jesus.

So why does John do this. Seems complicated, but I think it is both purposeful and helpful. We need to wrestle with the nature of saving faith. Is it enough to pray a prayer, confess faith, and then go on with life? I think John is helping us see that true saving faith has to have some key elements. First, saving faith actually begins with the work of God, who brings the new birth (John 3) and makes blind eyes see (John 8). Without this work of being drawn by the Father and born again by the Spirit we cannot have saving faith. Second, saving faith has to be in the true and right Jesus. People who just want the signs but don't want Jesus as their God have not truly believed. True faith involves us understanding the Biblical revelation and believing in Jesus as He is revealed, not in the Jesus of our own making that fits our agenda and makes us feel warm and fuzzy. Third, saving faith involves trusting in the work of Christ and bowing our knee to Jesus as my Lord and my God. The climax in John's Gospel happens in John 20:28 when Thomas, one of the Twelve, sees Jesus after his resurrection and makes this declaration, a statement of true faith. Jesus calls him blessed for faith, but then bestows a greater blessing on those who come to believe in Jesus as their Lord and their God even though they have never seen Him. This means that saving faith understands that God has remedied our sinful condition through the death of Jesus on the cross, and faith means I believe in Christ rather than my own goodness and works for my salvation. But saving faith also involves repentance, as I turn from myself as king and God of my life and bow my knee to Jesus as Lord (or King) and God. For John, and really for all of the Gospel writers, they want us to wrestle deeply with the meaning of what it means to believe. We strongly stand in the Reformation tradition that believes in the concept of Sola-Fide, that we are saved by faith in Jesus alone, apart from any works or goodness in ourselves. But we must work to be clear about what faith actually is. We are talking about way more than a mental agreement with a set of facts, or even an emotional response to Jesus as an idea. Genuine faith is an act of the Holy Spirit that causes us to see and love Jesus, trust in His finished work, and then give our lives to Him.

As we read and study John it will be important for us to wrestle with our own faith. We do not want to be among those who "believe" in Jesus, but Jesus will not entrust Himself to us because He knows what is in our heart. We need to examine ourselves to be sure that we are actually in the faith.

### **Applying John's Gospel to our Lives**

During this series we are going to be constantly asking three questions that will help us apply John's Gospel and the life of Jesus to our own journey.

#### **1. What does this text tell me about Jesus?**

Each week we will learn something about the identity, theology, mission, and purpose of Jesus. We will look at glimpses of His life and see the beauty of His ministry. We hope that you will leave each week with a clearer understanding about Jesus.

#### **2. What does it mean to believe in Jesus?**

Since this is the goal, every story is helping us understand genuine faith in Jesus more clearly. Each week we hope to lead us all to understand what it would look like if we

truly understood what the text is saying about Jesus and our belief in Jesus was deeply shaped by this.

### **3. What does it mean to bear witness about Jesus?**

As John writes he shows us several people who bear witness of Jesus. These include John the Baptist, a Samaritan woman, and a man who was healed of blindness. We come to realize that those who have believe in Jesus and are experience the abundant life and glorious light of Christ will want to make Him known. It will be our desire to point out something from each text we look at that we could share in conversations with people who are not believers in Jesus. We hope you will take advantage of this and find ways to build relationships, share drinks or meals, and talk to people about what you are discovering about Jesus.