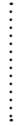


The Gospel of John

SPRING 2020



What would happen if Jesus came to campus?

This is the question we'll try to answer this semester. There is a cheesy way of answering this question that we'll try to avoid. We'll avoid artificial or overly imaginative renderings of Jesus eating at the 90 or studying at Willy T. First and foremost, the Bible will be our guide in learning about Jesus.

In the Bible, we have a reliable record of who Jesus was, what he said, and what he did. The Bible is rooted in history. It is anchored, in fact, by this historical person. We will be sensitive to this, recognizing that the Jesus we know, love, and worship didn't come to campus—he went to Galilee. Without being rooted in history, our understanding of the Bible will be faulty.

And yet the Bible is not merely an exercise in history. Unlike other books, our reading of the Bible is only significant to us when the words and actions of Jesus reach out of the page and into our hearts and minds. Moreover, Jesus didn't just live way back then and do things way back then. He's a historical person,

yes, but not merely so. He's alive and working *today*. He's alive and working everywhere...even on campus.

As far as reading Scripture goes, there are few better ways to come face-to-face with Jesus than through the Gospel of John. Like the other gospel writers, John is a tour-guide through the life of Jesus, but as a tour-guide he stands out. He directs our attention to Jesus in a fresh way. There are stories recorded about Jesus here that aren't recorded anywhere else. Even if we've taken the tour three other times already, John grabs our attention and further illuminates this man called Christ.

As one of the disciples, John literally walked with Jesus. Although writing years later as an old man, he recounts the stories with a youthful eloquence as your grandfather or grandmother might tell you stories about when they were young. His gospel richly glimmers with imagery, theology, and narrative. Rather than attempting to shine a light on the light, he simply opens up the blinds and enables the light to shine for itself. For many Christian pastors, the gospel of John is where they point new believers who want to learn more about Jesus. And yet it is also a deep well that even the wisest and most learned Christians could never fully exhaust.

Just as John's greatest ambition is to let the light shine for itself, so is the ambition of this book. We believe that the same light which illuminated John nearly 2,000 years ago also illuminates us—you and I and everyone else reading this. That's one reason why we didn't want this book to be just a book for your group. John, like

the rest of the disciples, didn't learn to love Jesus by dropping by to hear a sermon each week, but by being with him as often as they could.

This book, we hope, encourages this by offering some structured time with Jesus throughout the week, not just on your group night. We hope this book helps create a habit of spending time with God (and the Bible) outside of your weekly group. Each week, this book has three sections that are to be completed prior to your group time. Don't worry. This shouldn't drown you with (more) homework. These are 10(ish) minute reflections on Scripture that will make your group discussions richer. If you don't get these sections done, no sweat—still go to group and join in the discussion! But we hope you'll find these sections to be enriching and even indispensable.

Further, we encourage you to spend daily time reading Scripture—not just three! This can be a good place to start, but ideally it would be just that. A start towards creating a healthy habit in your life with God.

If you have questions, ask your group leader about it. But as with any group or curriculum or, well, just about anything, what my mom always said rings true: “you'll get out of it what you put into it.” We encourage you to “buy-in” to this book and your group this semester. Our prayer is that it will lead you deeper into life with Jesus and will be guided by him as you reflect deeper on life with Jesus on campus.