

Not religious any more?



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So... what do you believe?

7 studies in John 1 to 7

	Bible	Title	Study week	Sermon
1	John 1	Let's be clear.	Jul 17-21	July 23am
2	John 2	Is this enough for you?	July 24-28	July 30am
3	John 3	Are you born again?	July 31-4	Aug 6am
4	John 4	What really satisfies you?	Aug 7-11	Aug 13am
5	John 5	No religion—just believe.	Aug 14-18	Aug 20am
6	John 6	Are you convinced by this?	Aug 21-25	Aug 27am
7	John 7	From religion to belief.	Aug 28-1	Sep 3am

The journey from religion to belief...

One of my favorite quotes in the gospel of John is when Jesus is talking to a Samaritan woman and he says to her:

“A time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.” John 4:23

Jesus is speaking to a woman who felt that she was outside the true children of God because she was of the wrong religious descent (not a Jew). Even though she hoped in the Messiah and had some sense of belief in God, she felt unable to hurdle the barriers the religious leaders had put in place. But Jesus assures her the time has come for religious obstacles to be set aside and belief to come to the fore. The time has come to worship the Father—not through man made religion—but in spirit and truth.

Jesus is telling the woman that she can worship the Father right now, by simply believing in—putting her faith in—the life giving Word God has spoken, God’s own Son, none other than the one she is talking to! Could it be that easy? Even for a sinful Samaritan woman?

The answer is an unqualified yes. Eternal life, membership of God’s kingdom, the right to become children of God belongs to those who believe what John has to say (*what God has to say*) about Jesus. Listen to the purpose statement John gives for his gospel:

“These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John 20:31

Sometimes we forget that Christianity is a matter of belief. It’s easy for our Christianity to boil down to a few particular religious patterns and practices and ethical principles. But Christianity is no religion. It is a conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and it is life—real perfectly satisfying eternal life—for all who believe.

As we read through John I pray our conviction of who Jesus is would be clarified. And I pray we’d all be clear that belief in his name is the only way to receive the satisfaction of eternal life with the Father.

Study 1 - John 1:1-18 - Let's be clear

Warm up: What would you tell your friend you believe?

Read John 1:1-3

1. *John the apostle who wrote this gospel was a Jew who believed that in the beginning God created the heavens and earth by speaking (by his word – see Gen 1). By calling Jesus the Word in vs 1-3, what claim is John making about him?*

2. How does John's claim that Jesus is the God of creation sit with you? How would you feel about sharing that with your friends?

Read John 1:4-13

3. *John calls Jesus "the light" here. What do you think it means that he is "the light"?*

4. *Why did John (John the apostle is talking about John the Baptist – confusing hey!) testify about Jesus according to v 7?*

5. How have people responded to "the light" and John's testimony about "the light" (see v 5 and vs 10-13)?

6. Does it matter if we do or do not believe in the claims John is making about Jesus? Explain why or why not from this passage.

Read John 1:14-18

7. *Again, John is making some massive claims for us to believe about Jesus. What is he claiming about Jesus in vs 14 and 18?*

8. Do you believe these claims about Jesus? Why or why not?

9. *In vs 16 and 17 we get a hint as to why it is essential for us to believe in Jesus. What does Jesus give us that no one has before (see also John 1:29-30)?*

Read John 20:30-31

10. *This is the other end of John's gospel and where he states his purpose for writing his book. What claims does he want his readers to believe about Jesus? And why does he say it's important for people to believe?*

11. Write down what you believe about Jesus.

12. How can we help people in the world to hear John's claims about Jesus and to give them some consideration?

Pray

In response to this study...

Other things...

Study 2 — John 2:1-22 — Is this enough?

Warm up: What evidence might you give for your faith?

Read John 2:1-5

1. *Jesus mother seems to be convinced that he has the power to deal with wine shortages. Why do you think he tells her that his time/hour has not yet come (see also John 7:30, 8:20, 12:23, 12,27, 13:1, 17:1)?*

Read John 2:6-11

2. *In the writings of the old testament prophets the production of choice wine is something associated with what the Lord will do when he restores his people (see Isaiah 25:6; Amos 9:13). Here Jesus takes jars the Jewish people used for ceremonial washing and fills them with the best wine this wedding has ever seen. What do you think all this means?*

3. What did the disciples think all of this meant about Jesus?

4. Does this account of the wedding at Cana help you to believe John's claim that Jesus is God the Son? Why or why not?

Read John 2:12-17

5. Why is Jesus so angry about the temple being mistreated?

Read John 2:18-22

6. How do the Jews respond to Jesus actions and words?

7. What proof does Jesus offer them that he really does have the authority of his Father?

8. What leads the disciples to believe Jesus claims?

Read John 20:24-31

9. *Thomas and the other disciples were convinced that Jesus was the Son of God when they witnessed the risen Jesus. Is this enough to convince you to believe? Why or why not?*

10. How comfortable would you feel explaining Jesus authority to a friend? What evidence would you use?

Pray

In response to this study...

Other things...

Study 3 - John 2:23-3:21 - Are you born again?

Warm up: Why might you not tell your neighbor about Jesus?

Read John 2:23-3:2

1. Why wouldn't Jesus entrust himself to the men who believed in him because of the miraculous signs he was doing?

2. *Here we meet someone labeled "a man". This man believes something about Jesus. What does he believe and why?*

3. How is what Nicodemus believes similar or different to what you believe about Jesus?

Read John 3:3-12

4. *In chapter 1 in vs 10 to 13 (read it) John spoke of a new kind of birth, not the ordinary birth that we all have, but he spoke of being born of God. How did John say in chapter 1 that someone can be born of God?*

5. How does this help us to understand what Jesus means in chapter 3 when he tells Nicodemus he must be 'born again' to enter the kingdom of God?

6. *It seems that Jesus is implying that Nicodemus is not yet born again – even though he believes Jesus is sent from God. What must he believe to be born again?*

7. If being born of a husband's will or natural descent is being born of water (i.e. when the water breaks) what does Jesus call being born of God here? Why do you think he uses that term?

8. Have you been born again? How can you know (see again 1:12-13 if you're not sure)?

Read John 3:13-15

9. *Jesus claims he is not just "from God" like John the Baptist in 1:6 or other prophets, he is from heaven!* What other claim is Jesus making about himself here that people need to believe to have eternal life (*As a bit of background, Moses held up a snake in Numbers 21:4-9 and when people obeyed God and looked at it they were spared God's judgment on their sin*)?

Read John 3:16-21

10. Why is believing or not so important according to vs 16-18?

11. How do we come into the light (*see vs 19-21 and also v 2*)?

12. How can we stay in the light and help others to step in?

Pray

In response to this study...

Other things...

Study 4 - John 4:1-42 - What really satisfies you?

Warm up: Where do your friends look for satisfaction?

Read John 4:1-9

1. *Samaria was once part of Israel, but after a succession of evil kings the Lord sent them into exile. Only one tribe remained - Judah. The Jews believed they were now the only true children of God and they no longer associated with Samaritans and regarded them as unclean - even though they were all once children of Jacob. We don't know for sure at this stage of the account—but why might Jesus be associating with a Samaritan?*

Read John 4:10-14

2. What is the gift Jesus refers to in v 10 (see also 3:16)?

3. Despite the woman's evident suspicion of Jesus—probably because he's a Jew—what does he offer her?

4. What's so radical about his offer (see also 1:10-13)?

5. Do you think there are people today, like the Samaritan woman, who feel they can't have access to the Christian God?

Read John 4:15-26

6. *Like the people she's part of, the woman has been hopelessly lurching from one thing to the next to find satisfaction and fulfillment (v 18)— but she's still thirsty (v 15). She's also aware that as a Samaritan the Pharisees have made it clear that she*

can't access the God of Jerusalem for satisfaction (v 20). But, Jesus tells her a time of change is coming (v 21). How does he say she will be able to find satisfaction when that time comes?

7. What does Jesus mean by worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth (see 3:5, 1:13 and 1:17)?

8. So, in your own words, how can the woman find satisfaction?

9. *One of the challenges people make against Christianity is that it seems bizarre that God would appear to a small nation at one point in history even though he allegedly made the whole world.* How does this passage help you to respond to this challenge?

Read John 4:27-42

10. Compare/contrast Jesus priorities with those of the disciples.

11. What is so radical about the way this passage ends?

12. Are your priorities more like those of Jesus or those of the disciples? How can they be more like those of Jesus?

Pray

In response to this study...

Other things...

Study 5 - John 5:1-47 - No religion—just believe.

Warm up: What does the word 'religion' conjure up for you?

Read John 5:1-9a

1. Describe the place Jesus has come to. Why would he come to this kind of place?

2. What do you think compelled him to heal this particular man?

Read John 5:9b-15

3. *Jesus responded to this man's story with compassion. How would you describe the Jew's response to this man?*

4. *In response to his healing the man goes to the temple (v 14). Yet, when Jesus sees the man he warns there is a significant change he still needs to make. What could it be?*

5. How does he respond to Jesus warning (see also 1:5, 11)?

6. Have you responded to all that God has done for you by doing religious deeds? Or with a heartfelt acknowledgment of your dependence on God's Son? Is there a difference?

Read John 5:16-18

7. What is it about Jesus that the Jews find hardest to swallow? Why might that be?

Read John 5:19-30

8. What is Jesus saying people must believe about himself and what does he say the consequences are of believing or not (remember John's point in 20:30-31)?

9. *Jesus warned the healed man in v 14 that unless he changed something worse would happen to him.* How bad could things get for the man according to Jesus words here?

Read John 5:31-47

10. *The Jews took great pride in their ability to keep the law of Moses and do good.* But what does Jesus say their fundamental mistake is?

11. Do you think we sometimes we forget the fundamental heart of Christianity? Explain.

12. Why is it so important to keep Jesus at the center of our faith?

Pray

In response to this study...

Other things...

Study 6 - John 6:1-59 - Are you convinced yet?

Warm up: What do people today think of Jesus miracles?

Read John 6:1-15

- 1. This account happens some time after Jesus confrontation with the Jewish leaders. Jesus has just said they will not come to Jesus to have life (5:39-40). Even though he has come to them to give life (3:16) they have not received him. But despite the leaders not following Jesus, the people are still following him. Why are the people of Israel still following Jesus here?*
- 2. This event happens near the time of the Jewish Passover Feast. The Feast was a memorial to God's rescue of Israel in Egypt. After performing several miraculous signs to rescue Israel, God's final sign was to take the life of every firstborn child in Egypt, passing over only those who followed Gods instruction to put the blood of a lamb over their doorpost (Exodus 7-12). The feast was a meal that reminded the Israelites of God's mighty power to save. What, if anything, is significant about this event happening near the time of Jewish Passover Feast?*
- 3. Verse 6 says Jesus is testing his disciples. How are they going with their understanding of who he is?*
- 4. There are twelve tribes of Israel and twelve full baskets left after the feast. What is the significance of this feast?*
- 5. Why wouldn't Jesus let the people make him king?*

Read John 6:16-24

6. *The disciples find themselves in a tough spot but then Jesus speaks a few words in v 20 that seem to change everything (in Greek the words are literally 'I am, don't be afraid'). Have a look at Exodus 3:13-14. What is Jesus saying about himself?*

7. If you had to explain who Jesus was to your neighbour from these two events, what would you say?

Read John 6:25-31

8. How have the people responded to Jesus' miracle feast?

Read John 6:32-59

9. What further feast does he say is going to be offered to them (see in particular v 33, 35, 48-51)?

10. How satisfying will this feast be for those who eat it? What about those who don't?

11. What is it that Jesus really wants from the people?

Pray

In response to this study...

Other things...

Study 7 - John 7:1-52 - From religion to belief.

Warm up: How do you feel that half Australia has 'no religion'?

Read John 7:1-13

1. *In John's intro he said Jesus came to his own, but his own did not receive him.* How do we see this in this passage?

2. Why won't people receive Jesus?

Read John 7:14-24

3. *The Jews were amazed at Jesus learning.* Where does Jesus say his learning came from?

4. *The Jews have judged Jesus' learning (15).* What is Jesus' assessment of the Jews' learning (18-24)?

5. What is the 'right judgment' Jesus wants them to make (24)?

Read John 7:25-44

6. *There seems to be some confusion over where Jesus is from and where Jesus is going.* Where do people think he's from and where do they think he's going?

7. Where does Jesus say he's from and where is he going?

8. *John tells us twice in this section that no one laid a hand on*

Jesus - even though they wanted to. It is because 'his time had not yet come'. Before the end of John though his time will come. Why do you think he hung around so long until the crucifixion?

9. *The Feast of Tabernacles was a memorial to the time when the Jews lived in tents/booths in the wilderness. On a particular day of this festival there would have been a water feature set up in the temple to remind the people that God sustained their life by giving them water during their wilderness wanderings. Where does Jesus say life from God can be found now?*

10. If you had to explain to a friend where Jesus came from and where he has gone to, what would you say?

Read John 7:45-52

11. *At this stage in John there is mounting division over who Jesus is. Nicodemus is on a journey from religion to belief, but doesn't seem to be too confident yet in vs 50-52. Write down in your own words who you think Jesus is.*

12. How does your confidence in who Jesus is display itself in your day to day life?

Pray

In response to this study...

Other things...

NOTES/PRAYER POINTS

