

That You May Believe

©Copyright Matthew W. Bassford, 2012. This material is subject to a Creative Commons attribution-noncommercial-no derivative works license. This means that it may be reproduced, shared, and used freely, provided it is attributed to the author, not used for commercial purposes, and not altered in any way. For more information, please see creativecommons.org.

Table of Contents

Lesson One 2

Lesson Two 6

Lesson Three..... 10

Lesson Four..... 14

Lesson Five 18

Lesson Six..... 22

Lesson Seven 26

Lesson Eight..... 30

Lesson Nine 34

Lesson Ten..... 38

Lesson Eleven 42

Lesson Twelve..... 46

Lesson Thirteen..... 50

That You May Believe

Lesson One: John 13:1-20

Humility

Human beings seem universally possessed by the drive to dominate. From Chicago to China, men are determined to drive fancier cars, live in nicer accommodations, and sport more technological bling than their peers. They want everyone to recognize that they have Made It, that they have gotten more out of life than the poor schlubs who don't display the same level of wealth.

This impulse is nothing new. As Jesus' words in John 13 reveal, people 2000 years ago were every bit as status-obsessed as we are. Their version of bling had religious overtones, and it consisted of tasseled garments and Scripture-bearing phylacteries bound to the forehead, but it was still bling, and its message was still, "I'm better than you are." The Pharisees and the Romans alike craved respect. They

wanted to be known as "Teacher" and "Lord".

Jesus' version of status, by contrast, was entirely different. According to Jesus, the goal of life is not to force others to respect you, whether they want to or not. It is to serve them as humbly as possible. It is to put their goals and their needs above your own.

Most outsiders would reject this vision with a derisive laugh, but Jesus' words, though unconventional, are true. The joy that comes from status symbols and the envy of others is hollow and fleeting. It cannot fill the emptiness inside us. However, when we live for others, we find the only lasting satisfaction that this life has to offer, as well as the only life that gives us hope of the life to come.

That You May Believe: Lesson Twelve

5. John 15:12-16:4

6. John 16:5-33

7. John 17:1-26

8. John 18:1-27

9. John 18:28-19:16

10. John 19:17-42

11. John 20:1-31

12. John 21:1-25

That You May Believe

Lesson Thirteen: Review

For each of the contexts listed below, summarize the events of the context and its importance to us today.

1. John 13:1-20
2. John 13:21-38
3. John 14:1-14
4. John 14:15-15:11

That You May Believe: Lesson One

1. According to John 13:1, when do the ensuing events take place? What does Jesus know at this time? What is His attitude toward His disciples? What does this reveal about Him?
2. According to 13:2, what else is Jesus aware of? How is this going to influence His actions? Why is this important?
3. According to 13:3, what does Jesus know? In 13:4-5, what does He do about it? What is the connection between these things? What can we learn from this?
4. Whom does Jesus come to in 14:6? What does this man say? How does Jesus answer him in 14:7? What does Jesus mean by this?

That You May Believe: Lesson One

5. What does Peter declare in 13:8? What does Jesus tell him? What does this mean? What does Jesus want Peter to understand?

6. According to 13:9, what does Peter want? Does he show any better understanding of Jesus here? Why or why not? How does Jesus reply in 13:10? How does He explain His answer in 13:11? What does this show about what's on Jesus' mind?

7. What does Jesus do in 13:12? What does He say afterward? Does anybody answer Him? What does this show? Why is it important?

8. What does Jesus say the disciples call Him in 13:13? Is this correct? What conclusion does Jesus draw from this in 13:14? Why would this conclusion have shocked the disciples?

That You May Believe: Lesson Twelve

9. In 21:19, how does Jesus conclude His words to Peter? Has Jesus said anything like this before? If so, where? What does this illustrate about Jesus' intent for this meeting? What would Peter have gotten out of it?

10. Whom does Peter notice in 21:20? In 21:21, what does Peter ask about him? In 21:22, what answer does Jesus give? What is the application here for us?

11. According to 21:23, what has happened as a result of Jesus' words in the preceding verse? What clarification does John offer? What does this show?

12. What statement is made in 21:24? What can we learn from this? In 21:25, how does the gospel conclude? Why is this significant?

That You May Believe: Lesson Twelve

5. In 21:9, what do the disciples find? What does Jesus say in 21:10? What does Peter do about this in 21:11? What does the text reveal about the size of the catch of fish? Why does John include this detail?

6. What does Jesus say in 21:12? How do the disciples react? Why? What does Jesus do in 21:13? Does this sound familiar? John 6:11 may ring a bell. What does John reveal about this in 21:14?

7. What exchange takes place in 21:15-17? How many times is it repeated? What effect does this have on Peter? Why does Jesus do this?

8. What does Jesus say to Peter in 21:18? According to 21:19, why does Jesus say this? What does this imply about the timing of the writing of the gospel of John?

That You May Believe: Lesson One

9. What does Jesus say in 13:15? Is the example that He wants imitated His example of literal foot-washing? If not, what is Jesus talking about? What should we learn from Him here?

10. What does Jesus say in 13:16? What implications does this have for us? What does He declare in 13:17? Is humble service usually considered blessed in the eyes of the world? If not, what does Jesus want us to understand?

11. What does Jesus say in 13:18? What Scripture does He cite? Whom is He talking about? How does He explain His motivations in 13:19? Why is this important?

12. What does Jesus assert in 13:20? What does this mean? What can we learn from it today?

That You May Believe

Lesson Two: John 13:21-38

Free Will

Free will is one of the most precious gifts that human beings possess. It enables us to do something that nothing else in the creation can. Everything else, from squirrels to stars, praises God because their natures demand it of them. We praise God because we have a choice, and it is the freely offered fruit of our lips and our lives that best glorifies Him.

However, if that choice is to be real and meaningful, God must also give us the ability to choose not to glorify Him, to blacken our lives instead with ingratitude and sin. Sometimes, the choices that we make are disastrous indeed, and there can be no better example of this than the betrayer Judas.

Certainly, Judas had help in his own personal disaster. As the Scripture

tells us in John 13:27, Satan entered into him, and without the temptation that the devil presented, Judas could not have fallen. However, the reason why Satan found such a hospitable home in the heart of Judas was because Judas had prepared it beforehand. John observes in John 12:6 that Judas stole money from the poorbox, and to the man who takes bread from the mouths of hungry children, betraying the Son of God must seem like only a small step lower. We don't know why Judas was so prone to greed, but we do know that the devil took his vice and quite literally hanged him with it.

The lesson here, though, is not that Judas was especially bad. It is that any one of us is capable of monstrous things if we listen to Satan. Only we can choose to use our free will to glorify God, rather than to provoke Him to wrath.

That You May Believe: Lesson Twelve

1. What does John 21:1 say is happening? According to 21:2, what people are involved? What do they do in 21:3? Why would they do this? Why are they in Galilee in the first place? Matthew 28:10 may help you answer.
2. What happens in John 21:4? What is strange about this event? What conversation ensues in 21:5? Why would Jesus conceal His identity like this?
3. What does Jesus suggest in 21:6? What happens as a result? Does any of this sound familiar? You may want to refer to Luke 5:4-6 in your answer.
4. In John 21:7, what conclusion does John reach? Why does he reach this conclusion? How does Peter react? In 21:8, what do the rest of the disciples do? What does it seem like Jesus is doing here?

That You May Believe

Lesson Twelve: John 21:1-25

“Follow Me”

The story of John 21 is one of the most striking pieces of divinely orchestrated theater in the entire Bible. At its beginning, Jesus has instructed the disciples to return to Galilee, the place where His ministry began. While in Galilee, Peter and some of the other disciples decide to go fishing, the same pursuit they were engaged in when Jesus first called them.

They fish all night and catch nothing, just as they had caught nothing the first time around. A man whom they don't recognize yet calls out from shore and tells them to cast their nets one more time, just as Jesus had instructed them several years before. Once again, they find their nets immediately filled with a massive number of fish. Is it any wonder that John says at once to Peter, “It is the Lord”? The apostles

probably weren't familiar with the concept of déjà vu, but they certainly felt it!

However, the repeat of the miraculous catch of fish is not the final element of the spectacle that Jesus is orchestrating. That comes when He says to Peter, “Follow Me”, in exactly the same words that He had used to call him the first time around. For Peter, and for all the disciples there, the message is clear. Now that they have seen the life and death of Jesus, they finally understand what it means to follow Him. This is their opportunity to start over as His disciples, to put in to practice for the first time what He has taught them. In a sense, Peter and the rest are reborn by the lakeshore, and it is their selfless dedication, even at the cost of their own lives, that has given the rest of us the opportunity also to be reborn in Jesus, to follow Him too.

That You May Believe: Lesson Two

1. What is Jesus' mindset in John 13:21? What does He announce? In 13:22, how do the apostles take this? How many times this evening has Jesus said something similar? What does this reveal?
2. What seating positions are described in 13:23? Who is this disciple who is sitting near Jesus? What does Peter do in 13:24? Why is this information relevant to the larger story in this chapter?
3. In 13:26, what answer does Jesus give to Peter? What does He do? Why does Jesus respond in this way?
4. According to 13:27, what happens to Judas when he takes the morsel? What does this mean? What does Jesus say? Why does Jesus say this? What does it show about Him?

That You May Believe: Lesson Two

5. According to 13:28, how do the disciples take this? In 13:29, what do at least some of them think? What does this show about the disciples' state of mind? Why is this important?

6. What does Judas do in 13:30? In 13:31, what meaning does Jesus assign to this? Is this a strange thing for Jesus to say in this context? Why does Jesus say it?

7. What if-statement does Jesus make in 13:32? What then-statement follows it? What is Jesus talking about? Why does He mention this here?

8. How does Jesus describe His time with the disciples in 13:33? What does He say the disciples will do? What comment does Jesus offer about this? What is He trying to get them to understand?

That You May Believe: Lesson Eleven

9. In 20:21, what does Jesus say about the disciples? In 20:22, what does He do? What does He say in 20:23? What are we to make of this?

10. What information does John reveal in 20:24? What do the disciples say to Thomas in 20:25? How does he take this? Why is this significant?

11. In 20:26, what is the situation? What happens? What does Jesus say in 20:27? According to 20:28, how does Thomas take this? In 20:29, what commentary does Jesus offer? Why is this important to us?

12. What does John say about his gospel in 20:30? How does he describe his goal in writing it in 20:31? How should these things change our understanding of the gospel of John?

That You May Believe: Lesson Eleven

5. What is Mary doing in 20:11? According to 20:12, whom does she see in the tomb? What do they say in 20:13? How does Mary answer them? What is strange about her reply?

6. Whom does Mary encounter in 20:14? What does she not understand? In 20:15, what does Jesus ask her? What does she say in response? Why? What is still not clicking here for Mary? Why?

7. What does Jesus say to Mary in 20:16? How does she react to this? What does He tell her in 20:17? What is revealing about His word choice here? According to 20:18, what does Mary do?

8. What is the situation of the disciples in 20:19? What happens? In 20:20, how does Jesus establish His identity? What result does this have? Why does John tell us about this?

That You May Believe: Lesson Two

9. What new command does Jesus give in 13:34? What does Jesus say this love must be like? What does this require from us?

10. What does Jesus say will happen in 13:35? Is this true of our congregation today? If not, what do we need to do differently to make it true?

11. In 13:36, what does Peter want to know? What does Jesus tell him? In what senses is this true? What does it reveal about Peter?

12. What does Peter ask in 13:37? What does he assert? In 13:38, how does Jesus answer him? What is Peter's problem here? How can we avoid it in ourselves?

That You May Believe

Lesson Three: John 14:1-14

Heaven

To many people in the world, heaven sounds extremely boring. They tend to think of heaven in children's-storybook fashion, and they envision the citizens of heaven sitting around in white robes with harps and haloes on, doing nothing but singing hymns all the time. Boring!

Although this conception of heaven is very immature, the reaction of the worldling to it is more revealing than they know. As do several other places in Scripture, the first part of John 14 defines heaven as where Jesus is. No 70 virgins, no banquet tables bearing an inexhaustible supply of food. Just Jesus. Where Jesus is is heaven. Where He is not is hell.

To the fleshly minded, this doesn't seem like much of a choice. Hell seems like a strongly negative place from a fleshly perspective. After all,

nobody wants to spend eternity being burned forever with fire and being eaten forever by worms. However, the unspiritual don't see a corresponding benefit to being in heaven. They have no interest in Jesus in this life. They don't study His word to learn more about Him. They don't imitate Him. They don't glorify Him in song and prayer. Jesus means nothing to them, so a Jesus-centered vision of heaven also holds no appeal for them.

The child of God, however, understands that eternity with Jesus is the most precious thing imaginable. If we have spent our lives seeking Him with all our hearts, what greater reward could there be than finding Him forever? There is no fleshly joy in that, but the spiritual joy that the day will provide is unimaginable. Heaven is only heaven for those who want nothing more than Jesus. For all others, it is pointless.

That You May Believe: Lesson Eleven

1. What does Mary Magdalene do in John 20:1? What does she discover? According to 20:2, what does she do? What does she say? What does this reveal about Mary's expectations?
2. What happens in 20:3? According to 20:4, how does this develop? In 20:5, what does John say he did when he reached the tomb? What impression does all of this leave with us?
3. What does Peter do in 20:6? According to 20:6-7, what does this reveal? What is significant about these details?
4. What does John do in 20:8? What effect does this have on his mental state? How does 20:9 explain this? What happens in 20:10? What does all of this show about the level of understanding of the disciples?

That You May Believe

Lesson Eleven: John 20:1-31

The Resurrection

The prophets of the Old Testament predicted that the Messiah would be raised from the dead. Jesus Himself warned His disciples on numerous occasions that He would be betrayed to His enemies and killed, only to rise on the third day. Ironically enough, those enemies took Jesus' claims seriously enough that they induced Pilate to post a guard over His tomb to prevent His disciples from stealing His body.

Jesus' own disciples, by contrast, were so clueless concerning these things that none of them expected to see Jesus raised and none of them believed until they were confronted with the evidence themselves. John's gospel provides perhaps the most striking accounts of this lack of faith. Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb, finds that the body of Jesus has vanished, but as-

sumes that His enemies have taken it to mutilate it. Even when two angels appear, she asks them what they have done with the body. She only realizes that Jesus has risen after He appears to her Himself. Mary's male counterpart, Thomas, is assured by all the rest of Jesus' disciples that they have seen the risen Lord, but he refuses to believe until he puts his hands on the wounds of the living, breathing Jesus himself.

This reluctance on the disciples' part to believe is actually one of the pillars of our own faith. It negates the possibility that the resurrection was a hoax. After all, if people like Peter, Mary, and John weren't in on the hoax, who was? Their failure to anticipate the resurrection establishes for us that the resurrection was genuine.

That You May Believe: Lesson Three

1. What does Jesus say in John 14:1? What has Jesus just finished saying in the previous chapter? How does recognizing this help us understand His meaning? What does it teach us about chapter breaks?
2. What does Jesus reveal in 14:2? How does He explain the relevance of this to us? Where is Jesus taking this language from? What is He talking about?
3. What promise does Jesus make in 14:3? What result will this have for us? How does this help us to understand heaven?
4. What does Jesus say in 14:4? In 14:5, how does Thomas react? What does this show about the level of Thomas' understanding? Why is this important?

That You May Believe: Lesson Three

5. How does Jesus answer Thomas in 14:6? In what sense is Jesus each of these three things that He claims to be? What does this mean for us?

6. Also in 14:6, what does Jesus reveal about the existence of alternate paths to the Father? How much room does this leave for the idea that devout practitioners of any religion are pleasing to God? Why is this important?

7. In 14:7, what does Jesus say would have happened if the disciples had known Him? What does He say will happen from now on? What is Jesus talking about? Does this promise apply to us today? If so, how?

8. What does Philip want in 14:8? In 14:9, how does Jesus answer Him? How does Jesus explain the problem with Philip's question? How does this help us understand 14:7?

That You May Believe: Lesson Ten

9. What does one of the soldiers do in 19:34? In 19:35, what commentary does John offer about this? Was John in a position to make this observation? How do we know? What is it that John wants us to believe? What can we learn from his insistence on this point?

10. In 19:36, how does John explain these events? In 19:36-37, what Scriptures does he cite? Where are they found? How is this a "witness"?

11. Whom do we meet in 19:38? What is his situation? What does he do? Whom do we meet in 19:39? Where have we seen him before? What does he do? What does this passage show us about these two men?

12. In 19:40, what happens? In 19:41, what situation does John describe? In 19:42, what happens? Why is this information an important part of the story of the death of Jesus?

That You May Believe: Lesson Ten

5. According to 19:25-26, what people are among the witnesses to this scene? In 19:26-27, what does Jesus use this opportunity to do? What does Jesus want to happen here? What is the result? What does this illustrate about Jesus?

6. According to 19:28, what does Jesus know? What does He do? Why? In 19:29, what result does this have? In 19:30, what happens? What do Jesus' last words mean?

7. According to 19:31, what day is it? What is the significance of this day? What does this lead the Jews to do? How does this relate to Deuteronomy 21:22-23? What does this show us about the Jews?

8. What happens in John 19:32? What doesn't happen in 19:33? Why? Why is the conclusion that the soldiers reach here important?

That You May Believe: Lesson Three

9. What does Jesus ask in 14:10? What does He mean by this? How does He describe His own words? Does this mean that Jesus is a robot, without free will? If not, what does it mean?

10. What two alternatives does Jesus present in 14:11? Does it seem strange that at this late stage of His ministry, Jesus is still exhorting His closest disciples to believe in Him? Why is He doing this?

11. What does Jesus promise in 14:12? Why does He say that this will happen? How is the event that Jesus is predicting going to lead to the fulfillment of His promise? To whom will this promise apply?

12. What does Jesus promise in 14:13-14? What does this appear to mean? How do we reconcile this with passages like 2 Corinthians 12:7-9? What does it actually mean?

That You May Believe

Lesson Four: John 14:15-15:11

The Vine

The first part of John 15 is one of those passages that receives an extremely odd treatment at the hands of denominational commentators. Many will argue that in the parable, the different branches that are coming off of the vine are different denominations, and they point to the text as Scriptural justification for denominationalism.

Several problems with this interpretation appear immediately. First of all, when Jesus actually uttered the words of John 15, He was speaking to individuals, not to denominational bodies. Second, how far can a denomination depart from the truth before it ceases to be a fruit-bearing denomination? Does it reach that point only when it starts appointing homosexual clergy, or is teaching false doctrine concerning baptism also going too far? One

suspects that the number of healthy branches on the ecumenical vine would be very small indeed.

All levity aside, the message of John 15 is an important one to every individual Christian. It tells us that if we do not bear fruit, we will be cast into the fire and burned, and that apart from Jesus we can do nothing. Our very souls, then, depend on maintaining that life-giving relationship with Jesus.

The only way we can nurture this relationship is if we abide in the word and allow the word to abide in us. We must hunger for the truth of the Scripture, devote our days to feeding upon more and more of it, and then live out that truth in our daily walk. If we do this, we cannot help but bear fruit for God. If we fail in it, we may be certain that we will never glorify Him.

That You May Believe: Lesson Ten

1. What does Jesus do in John 19:17? What happens in 19:18? What is Jesus' mindset at this time likely to have been?
2. What does Pilate do in 19:19? In 19:20, what does this result in? What ironic consequence does this have?
3. In 19:21, how do the rulers of the Jews react to Pilate's inscription? In 19:22, what does Pilate tell them? What's behind this interplay?
4. What do the soldiers do in 19:23? Why? What problem do they encounter? According to 19:24, how do they solve the problem? What other effect does this solution have? Why is this important?

That You May Believe

Lesson Ten: John 19:17-42

Prophecy

In John 19:23-24, John recounts an incident that is also mentioned by the three writers of the Synoptic gospels. When the Roman guard stripped Jesus and crucified Him, they rewarded themselves by taking the clothes of the condemned man (who obviously wouldn't need them anymore, they thought), ripping some of them apart so every man got a piece of cloth, and casting lots for the seamless tunic.

This macabre, banal incident would probably not be mentioned in Scripture at all were it not for one thing. The writers of the gospels weren't the first to mention it. Writing about a thousand years before Jesus drew His first breath, the king David predicted in Psalm 22:18 that the enemies of the Messiah would divide and cast lots for His clothing. Then, a millennium later, the ene-

mies of Jesus do precisely what the prophet-king predicted.

Nor is this a unique occurrence. From the first day of His earthly life until the last, Jesus fulfilled dozens of prophecies, some grandiose, some obscurely detailed. However, one thing is true of nearly all of them. They were not things that Jesus could arrange His life Himself to fulfill. It was not up to Jesus to determine whether He would be born in Bethlehem or not. He could not restore sight to the blind without some kind of supernatural intervention. Even of the prophecies that could theoretically be manipulated, few actually would be. What man, for instance, would volunteer to be scourged by the Romans in order to get his Suffering Servant merit badge? The fulfilled prophecies show Jesus to be what we believe Him to be—someone who was truly the Son of God.

That You May Believe: Lesson Four

1. What does Jesus predict in John 14:15? Why would this be true? What does it require from us?
2. According to 14:16, what will Jesus do in response? According to 14:16-17, what result will this have? Who can't receive this? Why? By contrast, what is the relationship of disciples with the Spirit? Does this apply to us? If so, how?
3. What does Jesus say He isn't doing in 14:18? In 14:19, what does He predict will happen? What is He talking about? How does this relate to us?
4. What does Jesus predict in 14:20? In 14:21, what does He declare? What result will this have? What is He talking about?

That You May Believe: Lesson Four

5. What does Jesus ask in 14:22? In 14:23, how does He explain the process? What contrast does He make in 14:24? How does this show the importance of obedience?

6. What contrast does Jesus make in 14:25-26? How does the promise of 14:26 apply to us? How does it not apply?

7. What does Jesus say He is doing in 14:27? What is different about this peace? What does this mean? What attitude does He then encourage again in the apostles? In 14:28, what does He say they should be doing? Why? How does this make sense?

8. How does Jesus explain Himself in 14:29? According to 14:30, what will He not do? Why? In 14:31, how does He explain Himself? What are Jesus and the apostles doing at the end of chapter 14?

That You May Believe: Lesson Nine

9. What does Pilate tell the Jews to do in 19:6? Would this be a legal execution? How do the Jews answer him in 19:7? Why do they answer him in this way? In 19:8, how does Pilate take this? Why?

10. In 19:9, what does Pilate do? What result does this have? In 19:10, what does Pilate ask? What does this reveal about Pilate's thinking? In 19:11, how does Jesus reply? Why would He reply in this way?

11. What does Pilate do in 19:12? What argument do the Jews make against this? What are they implying? What does Pilate do in 19:13? Why does he do this?

12. According to 19:14, what is the day and time? What does Pilate do? In 19:15, what exchange ensues? In 19:16, what is the result? What is horribly ironic about all of this?

That You May Believe: Lesson Nine

5. What does Pilate ask in 18:37? How does Jesus answer? How does Pilate respond in 18:38? What does he mean by this? Why is Jesus' answer here important?

6. What does Pilate do in 18:38? What does he mention in 18:39? What does he propose? In 18:40, what answer does he get? What does this show us about the attitude of the Jews?

7. What happens to Jesus in 19:1-3? In 19:4, what does Pilate do? What does he declare? What does this show about his intent?

8. What happens in 19:5? What does Pilate say? In 19:6, what reaction does he get? How does this foil Pilate's plan?

That You May Believe: Lesson Four

9. What comparison does Jesus draw in 15:1? Why does He make this comparison at this time? What does Jesus reveal about the Father's work in 15:2? In real life, how does this happen?

10. What does Jesus say about the disciples in 15:3? What is He talking about? In 15:4, what does He encourage? Why? According to 15:5, what will the result of this abiding be? Why? How can we put this into practice in our lives?

11. According to 15:6, what will happen to disciples who don't abide? What promise does Jesus make in 15:7? How can this be true? How does Jesus explain the importance of abiding in 15:8? How should this change our spiritual outlook?

12. What does Jesus urge in 15:9? According to 15:10, how will this happen? In 15:11, why does Jesus say He has said all of these things? What does this tell us that we must do if we want to have joy in our lives?

That You May Believe

Lesson Five: John 15:12-16:4

The Holy Spirit

To many members of the modern-day charismatic movement, the miraculous spiritual gifts granted by the Holy Spirit are a just-because kind of thing. They speak in tongues as a sign of salvation, or perhaps simply because the Spirit moved them, not because God had any particular message to convey. They receive “healings” for not better reason than because they were sick, not because God wanted to use the healing to attest the validity of a prophet’s message.

It may not be apparent to the Scriptural novice, but this conception of the work of the Holy Spirit is subtly out of line with the way that the Scripture defines the actual work of the Spirit in the first century. Jesus defines the core mission of the Spirit in John 15:26, when He describes it as “the Spirit of truth” and says it

will “bear witness of Me.” The Holy Spirit is the means chosen by God to deliver His message to the world, and everything that it has ever done is related to that great work.

First-century Christians didn’t speak in tongues just because. Their gift of tongues enabled them to speak actual foreign languages, and they used the gift to fulfill prophecy and to teach the gospel to foreigners who had never heard it before. Likewise, the apostles were granted power to heal the sick because the healings proved that God was also responsible for the message they preached. Miracles confirmed the word. Today, then, if there is no new revelation from God, we should not expect the signs that were only ever used to support revelation. God has never acted without purpose, and He will not do so today either. We should expect no just-because miracles.

That You May Believe: Lesson Nine

1. What happens in John 18:28? What time is it? What do the Jewish leaders not do here? Why? What does this reveal about them?
2. Whom do we meet in 18:29? What does he do? In 18:30, how do the Jews answer him? What kind of an answer is this? What does it show?
3. In 18:31, what does Pilate tell the Jews? How do they answer him? What does this show about their intent? How does John explain all this in 18:32? What is he talking about? Passages like Mark 10:33 may help you answer.
4. What does Pilate ask Jesus in John 18:33? In 18:34, how does Jesus respond? How does Pilate answer Jesus in 18:35? What does Jesus assert in 18:36? How does He support His assertion? What does this exchange show about Pilate?

That You May Believe

Lesson Nine: John 18:28-19:16

Jesus' Enemies

One of the most common occurrences in the gospels is a confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees. Many of these confrontations follow a familiar pattern. The Pharisees come to Jesus with a question that they think will trap Him, Jesus answers the question in an astoundingly brilliant way, and the cocky scribes and lawyers come away looking like idiots.

From this, we might conclude that the adversaries of Jesus actually were idiots. However, the Scripture actually paints these men as quite shrewd despite their spiritual blindness. This is perhaps most clearly displayed in the way they manipulate events so that Jesus dies.

First, they bribe one of Jesus' closest followers to reveal His nighttime habits. They arrest Him in the wee

hours of the morning so that His apprehension doesn't cause a riot. Then, they get Him to confess that He is the Son of God before the Sanhedrin, so that His judges become the witnesses to His "blasphemy".

After that, they present Him to Pilate not as a blasphemer, but as a self-proclaimed king and rebel against the Roman government. They deflect Pilate's attempt to have Barabbas replace Jesus on the cross. Finally, when Pilate makes noises about releasing Jesus anyway, they blackmail Pilate into condemning Him by threatening to tell Caesar that Pilate is allowing would-be kings to rebel unhindered. The Jewish leaders pursued an evil end, no doubt, but they pursued it with great skill and cunning. The men that Jesus embarrassed so easily weren't fools. He was simply far wiser than any mere human had a right to be.

That You May Believe: Lesson Five

1. What does Jesus command in John 15:12? What does He say in 15:13? What does He add in 15:14? How does 15:13 explain 15:12? How does 15:14 explain 15:13?
2. According to 15:15, what does Jesus not call the apostles? Why? What does He call them? Why? What does this tell us about the importance of Christian's learning God's will for themselves today?
3. What does Jesus say about the reason for the apostleship of the apostles in 15:16? Why did He do this? What two results will this have? In what way does this apply to us today?
4. In 15:17, how does Jesus explain His commandments? What are the "these things" here? What does this teach us about love?

That You May Believe: Lesson Five

5. What situation does Jesus present in 15:18? What does He want the apostles to understand about this? How does He explain the reasons for the world's love and hatred in 15:19? How do Jesus' words here help us to examine ourselves?

6. What does Jesus say in 15:20? What does this mean for the apostles? How does Jesus explain persecution in 15:21? Why is this true?

7. In 15:22, what does Jesus say would be true if He hadn't come? What is true now because He has come? How does this apply today?

8. What does Jesus say in 15:23? In 15:24, what does Jesus say would have made them not guilty? What does make them guilty? What conclusion does Jesus reach about this in 15:25? How are these different ideas connected to one another?

That You May Believe: Lesson Eight

9. In 18:17, what does the servant girl ask? What does she mean by "also"? How does Peter answer her? What situation is presented in 18:18? What can we learn from this?

10. What happens in 18:19? Who is this high priest? Why is he described in this way? In 18:20-21, how does Jesus respond? Why does Jesus give this kind of answer?

11. What happens to Jesus in 18:22? What does Jesus say about this in 18:23? How does this help us understand passages like Matthew 5:39? According to John 18:24, what is the outcome of this exchange?

12. In 18:25, what is Peter's situation? What happens? What does Peter do? In 18:26, what happens next? In 18:27, what does Peter do about this? What concludes this sequence? Why is this significant?

That You May Believe: Lesson Eight

5. What happens in 18:10? In 18:11, what does Jesus say about this? How does Jesus' behavior here compare to the typical behavior of a fugitive who is being arrested?

6. What happens to Jesus in 18:12? To whom do they take Him in 18:13? What is significant about this man? What is significant about his son-in-law? Why does John mention this here?

7. According to 18:15, what two people follow Jesus? Who is this "other disciple"? What is true of him? What happens to him as a result? Why is this significant?

8. What is Peter's situation in 18:16? What happens to resolve this situation? How does this exchange connect John and Peter?

That You May Believe: Lesson Five

9. Who does Jesus say is coming in 15:26? Where is this Comforter coming from? What will the Comforter do? How? What can we learn from this about the purpose of miracles?

10. In 15:27, what does Jesus say the apostles will do? Why will they be able to do this? Can Christians today "witness" that Jesus is the Christ? Why or why not? Why is this important?

11. How does Jesus explain His motivation for saying these things in 16:1? In 16:2, what does He predict will happen? Are these the sorts of things that we would say to encourage a less mature Christian? What does this tell us about the difference between Jesus' mindset and our own?

12. How does Jesus describe the motives of His enemies in 16:3? How does He explain His reasoning in 16:4? Why did He want the apostles to remember these things?

That You May Believe

Lesson Six: John 16:5-33

In Jesus' Name

In John 16:23, the Lord promises, "Whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to You." Because of these words, Christians habitually end their prayers with some variation on the phrase, "In Jesus' name we pray, Amen." There is nothing wrong with this practice. My mother probably taught me to pray in this way before I was out of diapers, and I continue it today.

However, we must recognize that our habitual prayer conclusion isn't really what Jesus is talking about. We understand that merely saying that something is done in Jesus' name doesn't actually mean that it has been done in His name. Through the centuries, men have justified all sorts of vile acts by claiming that they were acting in the name of Jesus. Such a use of His name can only be in vain.

In reality, here as elsewhere in Scripture, the word "name" means "authority." When we pray in the name of Jesus, we pray by His authority. This is relevant in several different senses. First, not everyone has the right to pray and expect a hearing. We only have that right because we have been baptized into Christ. Jesus authorizes us to pray because we are His disciples.

Second, we most truly pray in Jesus' name when we pray in accordance with His promises. For example, Scripture never promises any of us unlimited earthly life and good health. When we pray for those things, we may be disappointed. However, when we seek the spiritual blessings that God has guaranteed, He will grant us what we ask every time. Only when we put the kingdom of heaven first are we certain to receive what we most value.

That You May Believe: Lesson Eight

1. Where do Jesus and His disciples go in John 18:1? According to 18:2, how does this make Jesus vulnerable? In 18:3, what result does this have? What does Jesus' behavior here show about His intent?
2. What does Jesus do in 18:4? What answer does He get in 18:5? What does this tell us about the level of confusion in this encounter?
3. In 18:5, how does Jesus answer the mob? In 18:6, what result does this have? Why does it have this result?
4. What does Jesus do in 18:7? What answer does He get? How does Jesus reply in 18:8? How does 18:9 explain this reply? What insight does this exchange give us into Jesus' thinking?

That You May Believe

Lesson Eight: John 18:1-27

The Eyewitness

For much of my life, I never gave much thought to the process by which the gospels were created. If I thought about it at all, I assumed that God injected content into the heads of the inspired authors, and they robotically copied down what He told them to write.

However, this simplistic notion of the authorship of the gospels does the authors—and the ultimate Author—a disservice. God didn't want us treating the gospels like myths or fairy tales. He wanted us to understand that they relate historical fact, and so He had them constructed in a way that mirrors the construction of good history. Luke, for instance, spends the earliest portion of the gospel that bears his name describing his research methods, explaining why he, a man who was not one of the first disciples of Je-

sus, felt qualified to write a "certain" account of the life of Christ. Mark is less forthcoming about his process, but clues both inside and outside of the gospel point to the conclusion that Mark's primary source was none other than the apostle Peter himself.

The strongest claim to historical validity, though, is made by the gospel of John. In John 18:15, John explains how he knew the substance of the early-morning conversation between Jesus and Annas, the high-priest emeritus. He knew because he was standing in the room listening when the exchange took place. Doubtless, the Holy Spirit aided John's recall, but the basic memories were his own. When we read John, then, we aren't reading somebody's tall tale. We are reading nothing less than an eyewitness account.

That You May Believe: Lesson Six

1. According to Jesus in John 16:5, what isn't happening? How does He describe the mental state of the disciples in 16:6? What significant change has occurred here?
2. According to Jesus in 16:7, is His departure going to be a benefit or a detriment to the disciples? Why? What does this reveal to us about the plan of God?
3. According to 16:8-11, what three things is the Comforter going to do? Why is the Comforter going to do each of these three things? Does this process still continue today? If so, how?
4. What predicament does Jesus describe in 16:12? What solution does He mention in 16:13? Why will this solve the problem? According to 16:14-15, what else will the Spirit do? What do Jesus' words here reveal about the work of the Spirit?

That You May Believe: Lesson Six

5. What does Jesus say in 16:16? In 16:17-18, how do the disciples react to this? Why would they react in this way?

6. What does Jesus do in 16:19? In 16:20, what does He promise? What comparison does He make in 16:21? How does He conclude this discussion in 16:22? What is He talking about here?

7. In 16:23, what does Jesus say He won't do? What will happen instead? What instruction does He give in 16:24? What does this mean?

8. How does Jesus describe His current conduct in 16:25? What does He say He will do in the future? Why will Jesus change His behavior in this area?

That You May Believe: Lesson Seven

9. According to 17:20, for whom is Jesus praying? What does He ask in 17:21? Why? How can we today be so united that our unity causes others to believe in Christ?

10. What does Jesus say He has done in 17:22? According to 17:22-23, what effect will this have on the disciples? What effect will this have on the world? What is Jesus talking about here?

11. What is Jesus asking for in 17:24? Why? Why would Jesus want this? Why would we want it?

12. According to 17:25, what does the world not know? What does Jesus know? What do the disciples know? According to 17:26, what is Jesus continuing to do? Why? How are these things related?

That You May Believe: Lesson Seven

5. In 17:11, how does Jesus describe the difference between His situation and the disciples' situation? What does He ask the Father to do for them? What result does Jesus anticipate that this will have? Why would Jesus' request lead to this result?

6. What does Jesus say He has done in 17:12? What effect did this have? According to 17:13, what is He doing now? Why? Why is Jesus thinking about this sort of thing here?

7. In 17:14, what does Jesus say He has done? What has this resulted in? What does He seek in 17:15? In 17:16, how does He explain this request? How does this illuminate the relationship between the Christian and the world?

8. What does Jesus ask in 17:17? How will this be accomplished? In 17:18, what does Jesus say He has done? In 17:19, how does He explain His own behavior? What does this teach us about holiness?

That You May Believe: Lesson Six

9. What does Jesus say the disciples will do in 16:26? What won't happen? According to 16:27, why won't it happen? Why is this important?

10. What does Jesus say is happening in 16:28? In 16:29, how do the disciples describe this? In 16:30, what do they conclude? What insight does this give us into the minds of the disciples?

11. What does Jesus rhetorically ask the disciples in 16:31? In 16:32, what does He reveal about the disciples' future? What result will this have for Jesus? Why? What can Jesus teach us here?

12. How does Jesus describe His goal in 16:33? What promise does He make? How does He say the disciples should react to this? Why? What does Jesus mean by this?

That You May Believe

Lesson Seven: John 17:1-26

Unity

In John 17:20-21, Jesus prays one of the most ambitious prayers that He ever prayed. He asks for His disciples to be one, just as He and the Father are one. Sadly, this beautiful thought has often failed to find a real-world expression. In the denominational world, men who were at least nominally believers have fought wars over differences between doctrines and creeds. Even in the Lord's church, too many churches to number have split over various disagreements, and at times, even the whole brotherhood has been torn apart by contention.

Nonetheless, if we are true disciples of Jesus, it is our responsibility to make His vision of unity a reality. In order for this to happen, two pre-conditions must exist. First, the brethren in a congregation must love one another. This love must be

evident in both a phileo and an agape sense. Our closest friends and associates must be our brethren in Christ, and we must be willing to do anything for one another, even to surrender our own personal wants and preferences for the sake of the greater good.

Second, we must love the Lord and love His word. It is true that doctrinal differences have caused much division. However, the root problem behind that has not been that some insisted too strongly on the authority of the word. It has been that some refused to accept its authority. They fell in love with their own ideas rather than "thus says the Lord". When that spirit appears among the brethren, division is inevitable. We can only avoid it by returning again and again to the Scripture, challenging ourselves individually and as a church to do a better job of obeying it.

That You May Believe: Lesson Seven

1. In John 17:1, what does Jesus ask for? In 17:2, how does He explain this request? What path to eternal life does He present in 17:3? How can we come to this knowledge ourselves?
2. What does Jesus say He has done in 17:4? How has He done this? In 17:5, what does He ask the Father to do? What does this reveal about the nature of Christ?
3. In 17:6, what does Jesus say He has done? How does He describe His audience? According to 17:7, what result has this had? In 17:8, what does Jesus say He did to accomplish this? What effects did this have? How are these ideas connected?
4. How does Jesus define the subjects of His prayer in 17:9? Why is He praying for them? How does He explain Himself in 17:10? What does this tell us about what the purpose of our lives should be?