

# Reflections with an Introduction to the Gospel of John

by Will Groben

*These short guided studies are designed to take only about ten minutes each day. Of course, if you are very reflective or you work hard at memorizing the key passage, you might invest more time than that, with more results!*

*“John 20.30-31” gives you the location of a Bible passage, in this case it means the book of John, chapter twenty, verses thirty through thirty-one. Your Bible will list the current book and chapter at the top of the page and have a table of contents to help you find the right book. Don’t be intimidated, you can do this!*

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## Day 1

**Learn:** Take a look at John 12.16 and John 20.9. Throughout this book, the apostle John shows how misunderstood Jesus was by his contemporaries, even by those who were closest to him. To misunderstand means to understand wrongly or incompletely. If you misunderstand something, then you *believe* you understand it *correctly*, but you do *not*; in other words, you are deceived!

**Reflect:** If the people closest to Jesus – those who knew him in the *flesh* and had been with him for *years* – misunderstood him, do you think it is at least *possible* that you could have some misunderstandings about Jesus? What actions could you take to grow in your understanding of Jesus? Of these, which action are you willing to start implementing in your life right away? Pray and ask God to help you commit to take these steps to know Jesus better.

**Memorize:** Write down John 20.30-31. Read it over to yourself several times. Try to memorize at least the first half of it. Take it with you today, and read it whenever you have a couple of minutes.

**Want more?** John, his brother James, Peter, and Peter’s brother Andrew had a fishing partnership on the sea of Galilee [Luke 5.10; Matthew 4.18]. They owned their own boats [perhaps with John’s father] and even employed others in the business [Mark 1.20]. Jesus would use language they could understand when he told Peter and Andrew that he would make them “fishers of men” [Matthew 4.19; Mark 1.17].

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## Day 2

**Learn:** Read John 20.30-31 again. Though the author John did not use the noun for *faith* in this book, one of the most important words in this book is the Greek verb πιστεύω [pronounced pi-STEU-oh] meaning *to believe*, which occurs ninety-eight times. John often used this verb in the present tense, which leads scholars to infer that John was trying to stress the need for actively, continuously, and deeply believing in what the scriptures say about who Jesus was and what he accomplished.

**Reflect:** Read John 20.24-29. Thomas – one of Jesus’ closest followers for years! – was confused and doubtful about Jesus’ resurrection. Take a moment to consider any doubts or issues of confusion you might have about Jesus. They might be big ones [like whether he was truly both God and man], they might be small ones [like whether he turned the water into wine or grape juice] or they might be off-the-wall ones [like whether in his humanity Jesus had romantic feelings]. Write down any questions, confusions, or doubts you have, so you can see if they are answered as we go through the book of John in the coming weeks.

**Memorize:** Continue to work on memorizing John 20.30-31. Practice saying it and writing it, including its “address” of “John 20, verses 30-31.”

**Want more?** John, James, Peter, and Andrew all became close followers [called “disciples”] of Jesus. John’s family was well enough placed in society that the High Priest knew him [John 18.15-16; John is the “other disciple”].

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## Day 3

**Memorize:** Continue to work on memorizing John 20.30-31. Practice saying it and writing it, including its “address” of “John 20, verses 30-31.”

**Learn:** In his commentary on the book of John, scholar D.A. Carson wrote about the first century approach to history writing. He said good historical writers “emphasized the importance of eyewitness participation in the events described, the importance of interviewing other eyewitnesses, travel to the scene of events to be narrated in an effort to gain an adequate grasp of the situation, checking details by documentary research, limitation of coverage to material where one

has reliable information, even occasional insistence on the use of sources for speeches, and certainly the idea of ‘truth’ in history writing, conforming to what actually took place.”<sup>1</sup>

**Reflect:** If this is the historical approach the author John took, can you rely on what he says about Jesus? What strikes you as reliable or unreliable about this approach to history? Do you think it will be worthwhile to spend a little time each day getting to know Jesus better by reading these scriptures?

**Want more?** After his brother James was killed by Herod [Acts 12.2], John became one of the pillars of the Jerusalem church, along with Peter and Jesus’ brother James [Galatians 2.9; Acts 8.14].

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#### Day 4

**Memorize:** Continue to work on memorizing John 20.30-31. Practice saying it and writing it, including its “address” of “John 20.30-31.”

**Learn:** In John 20.30-31, the apostle John wrote that Jesus is “the Christ.” *The Christ* is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew term, *the Messiah*. In the Old Testament [which the Jews had as their scriptures], there was extensive prophecy about the coming Messiah. For example, from the very beginning of mankind’s sin problem, God promised the offspring of a woman would come to save us [Genesis 3.15], and – hundreds of years before Jesus was born! – the prophet Isaiah described the woman as a “young maiden” or “young virgin” [the same word can mean both things; Isaiah 7.14]. Now look up Matthew 1.18-25 and Luke 1.26-38, which are the beginning of the fulfillment of these prophecies!

**Reflect:** Jesus fulfilled an amazing number of prophecies that were made hundreds or even thousands of years before he was born. There are over two dozen prophecies in the Old Testament about his crucifixion alone! Many of the prophecies are very detailed, such as where he would be born [check out Micah 5.2 and compare it to Matthew 2.1-10], and many are powerful, such as his death as a sacrifice for sin [check out Isaiah 53.1-12 and compare it to John 1.29; 11.49-52; Acts 10.43; 13.38-39]. How does it affect you to know that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies about the Messiah which were made hundreds or thousands of years earlier?

**Want more?** John and Peter traveled throughout Samaria [an area north of Jerusalem] and the surrounding area, ministering to believers and doing evangelism with non-believers. John eventually ended up in what is now western Turkey, headquartered in Ephesus, after Paul had moved farther west.

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#### Day 5

**Learn:** In John 20.30-31, John says Jesus is “the Son of God.” In the Hebrew culture, this could mean three things. First, “son of” was used to mean membership of a class, so “son of God” would mean Jesus was divine like God himself. Second, it meant a man who was appointed by God to exercise God’s judgment. Third, it meant someone who was related to God by covenant. Jesus, as the Messiah-King fulfills all three meanings [which we will see as we read the gospel of John].

**Reflect:** Do you have questions about the identity of Jesus as both God and man? If Jesus *is* divine, what does that say about whether you should try to understand what he wants from us?

**Memorize:** Continue to work on memorizing John 20:30-31. Practice saying it and writing it, including its “address” of “John 20.30-31.” If you can do it from memory now, you should be able to keep it memorized by practicing it once a week from now on.

**Want more?** Some of our information about the author John comes to us from Irenaeus, the “Bishop” [like today’s “Senior Pastor”] of Lyons, in what is now France. Irenaeus shared what he learned from Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, which was just north of Ephesus. Polycarp was close to John, probably mentored by him. Some of the churches in this area are addressed directly in the book of Revelation, also written by John.

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<sup>1</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991], 60. Carson cites Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*.