

The Gospel of **JOHN** Signs of God Among Us

Schedule

Participants are encouraged to read the chapters covered prior to the session.

Saturday, February 20

Introduction, Overview & Prologue
John 1:1-18

Saturday, February 27

First Week, First Sign & First Teaching
John 1:19 - 3:36

Saturday, March 6

The Water of Life & Sonship of Jesus
John 4:1 - 5:47

Saturday, March 13

The Bread of Life
John 6:1 - 71

Saturday, March 20

The Light of the World
John 7:1 - 9:41

Saturday, March 27

The Resurrection & the Life
John 10:1 - 11:54

Saturday, April 3

There will be no session
on Holy Saturday

Saturday, April 10

Preparations for the Passover
John 11:55 - 12:50

Saturday, April 17

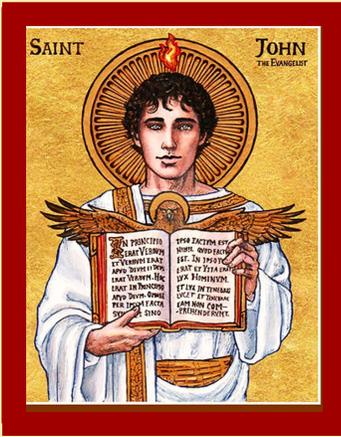
The Last Supper
John 13:1 - 17:26

Saturday, April 24

The Passion
John 18:1 - 19:42

Saturday, May 1

The Resurrection
John 20:1 - 21:25



The Gospel of John

The Fourth Gospel is arguably one of the most influential writings of our Christian tradition, coloring two thousand years of theology, prayer, art and imagination with its dynamic portrayal of Jesus. Its unique style makes it many people's favorite book of the Bible. While the synoptic gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke—correspond in their description of Jesus' life and ministry, John differs in a number of ways. In its chronology of Jesus' ministry, John mentions three Passover celebrations, covering three years, while Matthew, Mark and Luke recount only one. While the synoptics relate numerous miracles, John describe only seven. In John's Gospel, Jesus does not teach in parables; he delivers lengthy discourses.

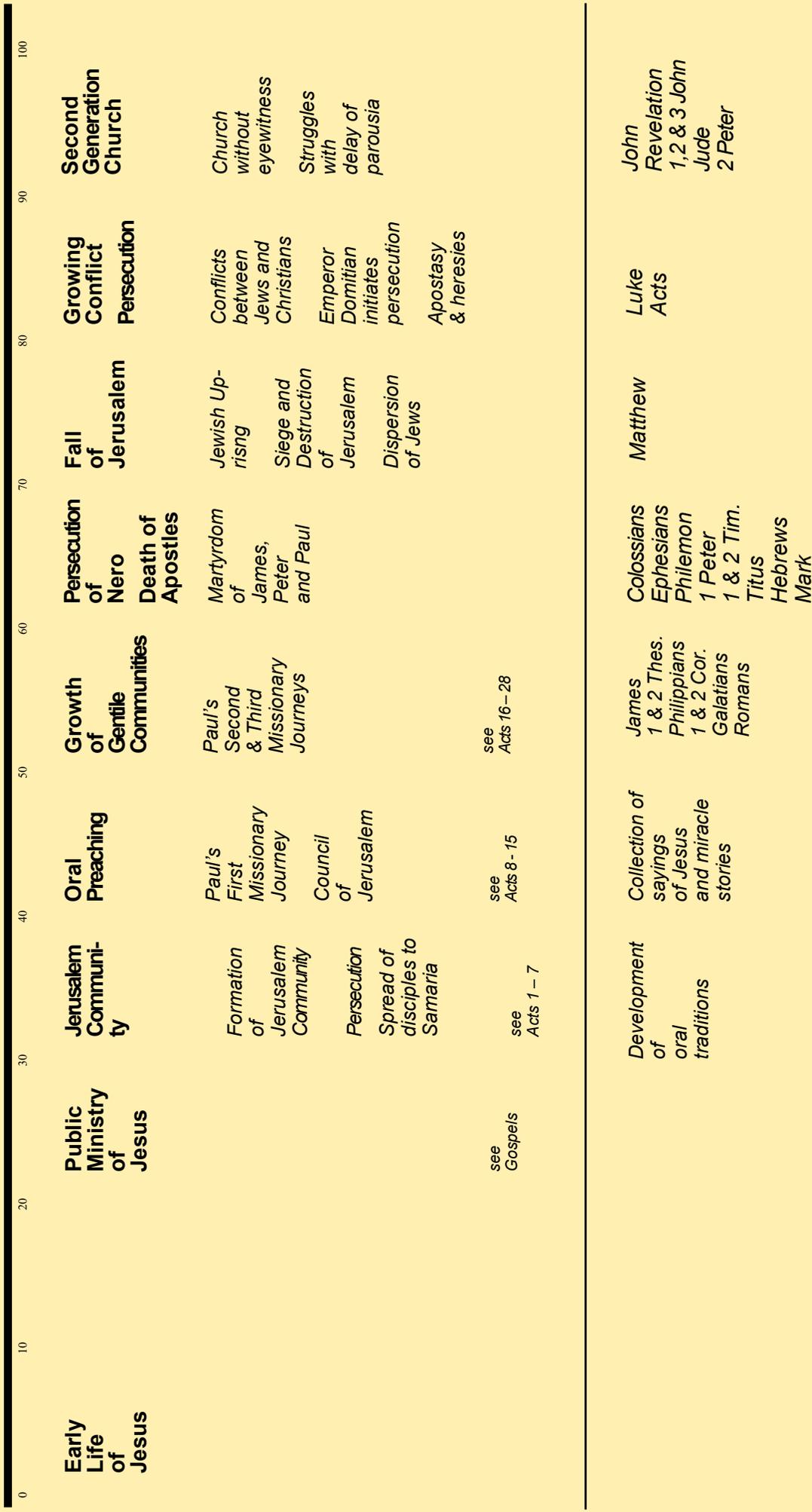
The differences between John and the synoptics rise from the fact that John's community differed in some ways from other early Christian communities. It had its own, independent tradition of Jesus' sayings and miracles, and—over the preceding sixty years—had developed its own understanding of Jesus' identity and the implications of his teaching. It has been proposed that some of the first members of the community may have been followers of John the Baptist who became disciples of Jesus. Over the decades, one of these early members seems to have become the central figure of the community, the Beloved Disciple, whose very person preserved the eyewitness account of Jesus, and who embodied the highest ideals of Christian discipleship. It is this tradition which the Gospel of John preserves.

John's community also seems to have developed its theology and its structure in ways that differed significantly from other Christian communities of its time. Some of these developments—their understanding of the Eucharist, their attitudes towards leadership—put them at odds with these other communities. At the same time, tension with the Jewish people grew after the destruction of Jerusalem as the Jews strove to maintain their identity in the Diaspora. As a result, the community's connections with its cultural heritage and religious tradition was strained. In addition, Christians themselves were questioning how the community could survive now that the eyewitnesses of the risen Christ were no longer with them.

The Gospel of John proclaimed a message of hope to this struggling church. It boldly proclaimed the community's faith in Jesus as the presence of God, the Word made flesh, who had walked and lived in their midst. The Gospel showed how the presence of Jesus had changed the lives of those whom he encountered—those who were able to "see" him through the eyes of faith. It called the struggling community to recognize that Jesus, the Word of God, was still alive in their midst, transforming the difficulties they faced into a new creation.

The powerful images and symbolism of the Gospel of John continue to speak to the us today, inviting us to recognize the signs of the presence of God among us. It invites us to "see" in new ways, and in doing so to find the presence of the risen Christ in our midst. It challenges us to have faith in the creative power of the Word made flesh, allowing it to transform us and the world in which we live.

Timeline of the New Testament Era



The Structure of the Gospel of John

THE BOOK OF SIGNS

Public Ministry

Jesus as Fulfillment of Signs

1. Jesus, the Water of Life

Woman at Well & Living Water 4:1-42
Second Sign: Official's Son 4:43-54

2. Feast of Pentecost (?)

Third Sign: Cure at Pool 5:1-18
Discourse: Jesus' Sonship 5:19-30
Four Witnesses to Jesus 5:31-47

3. Second Passover

Fourth Sign: Feeding of Crowd 6:1-15
Fifth Sign: Walking on Water 6:16-21
Discourse: Bread of Life 6:22-71

4. Feast of Tabernacles

Jesus and the Law 7:1-24
Discourse: Origins of Messiah 7:25-36
Jesus: Living Water 7:37-39
Woman Caught in Adultery 8:1-11
Jesus: Light of the World 8:12
Discourse: Abraham & Jesus 8:13-59
Sixth Sign: Man Born Blind 9:1-41
Discourse: Good Shepherd 10:1-21

5. Feast of Dedication

Jesus' Unity with God 10:22-42
Seventh Sign: Lazarus 11:1-44
Plotting of Jewish Leaders 11:45-54

Prologue

Statement of Theme 1:1-5
Summary of Gospel 1:9-16-18
Witness of John 1:6-8,15

Prelude

Introduction to Public Ministry
First Week: The Call 1:19-51
First Sign: New Wine 2:1-12
First Passover: New Temple
-14
First Teaching: New Law 3:1-21
End of John's Ministry 3:22-36

THE BOOK OF GLORY

Ministry to Disciples

Jesus as the Great Passover

1. Preparations for Passover

Anointing at Bethany 11:55-12:11
Entry into Jerusalem 12:12-19
Request of Gentiles 12:20-36
Unbelief of the Jews 12:37-50

2. The Passover Meal

Washing of Disciples' Feet 13:1-20
Betrayal of Judas Foretold 13:21-32
Denial of Peter Foretold 13:36-38

3. The Farewell Discourses

New Commandment 13:33-35
Trinity 14:1-31; 16:1-33
Vine & Branches 15:1-27
Priestly Prayer 17:1-26

4. The Trials

Arrest 18:1-11
Trial of High Priest 18:12-19-24
Peter's Denial 18:15-18,25-27
Trial before Pilate 18:28-19:16

5. The Passion

The Crucifixion 19:17-24
The Woman at Cross 19:25-27
Jesus' Death 19:28-30

The Piercing 19:31-37
The Burial 19:38-42

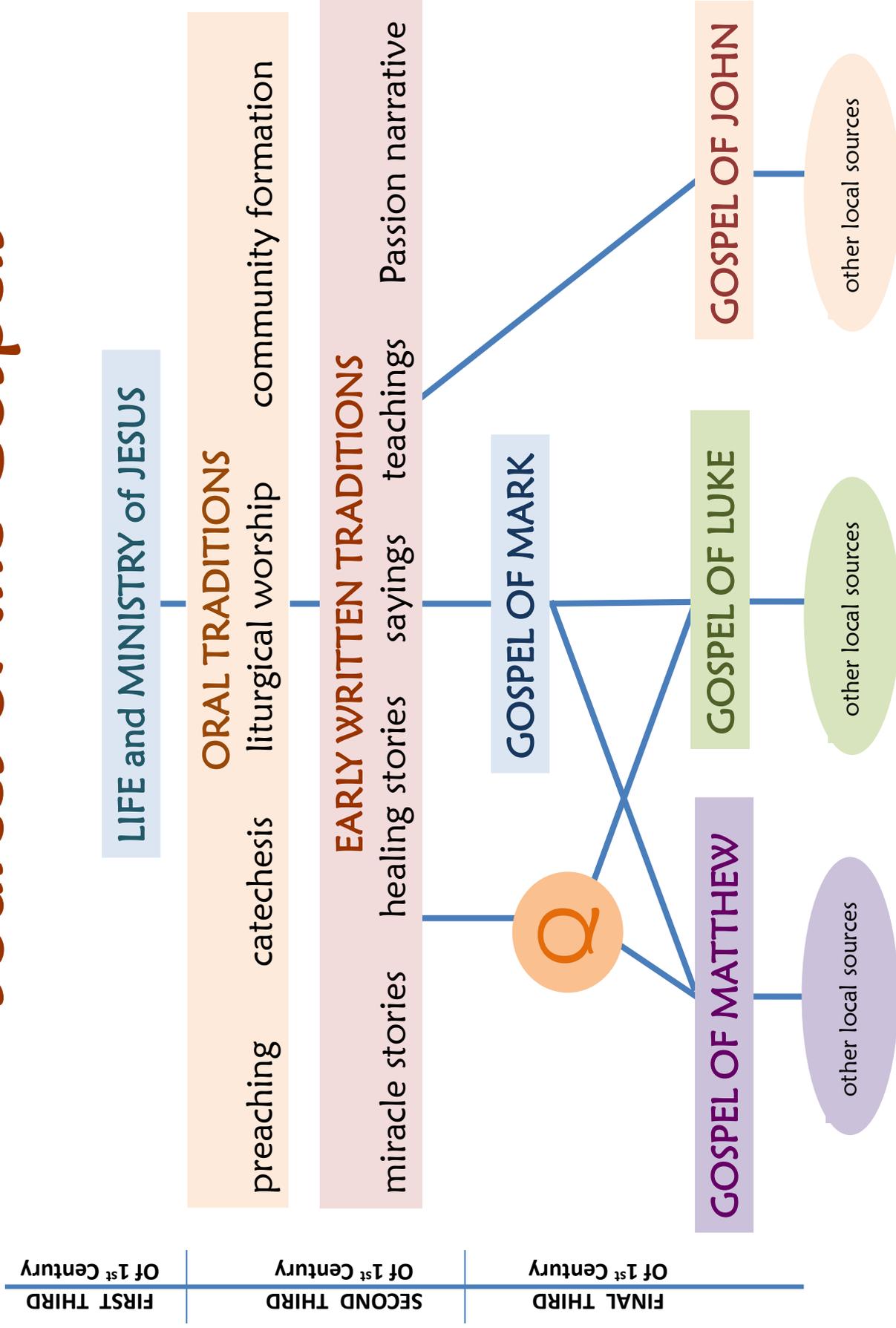
Epilogue

Seven Days of the Resurrection
The Empty Tomb 20:1-10
First Appearance 20:11-18
Second Appearance 20:19-20
Imparting of Spirit 20:21-23
Third Appearance 20:24-31

Conclusion

Appearance at Sea 21:1
Peter Commissioned 21:15-19
Beloved Disciple 21:20-25

Sources of the Gospels



Theme & Symbolism in the Gospel of John

the old made new

The Gospel of John uses images and symbolic actions to convey its message: the Word of God has become flesh and dwells among us; as a result, a new creation is begun, the old is made new. Drawing on Jewish liturgy and Scriptures, the writer retells the gospel story in ways that emphasize how the presence of God among us renews the world, transforming the symbols of the old order into the reality of the new. The following references may be helpful in understanding the Gospel's rich imagery.

WORD / WISDOM OF GOD

Exists with God before creation

Pr. 8:22; Sir. 1:4-10

Agent of creation *Pr. 8:27-31*

Reveals will of God

Pr. 8:31-36, Ws. 7:22-26



WORD MADE FLESH

Jesus with God in the beginning

Jn. 1:1-5

Jesus as Creator *Jn. 1:3*

Jesus reveals the Father

Jn. 1:18, 14:5-11

CREATION

7 days of creation *Gen. 1*



NEW CREATION

7 days of early ministry *Jn. 1*

7 days of Passion *Jn. 12-19*

7 days of Resurrection *Jn. 20*

Woman/Mother of Jesus *Jn. 2, 19*

Woman / Eve *Gen. 1,3*

YAHWEH / I AM

"This is what you are to say to Israel:

'I Am has sent me to you'" *Ex. 3:14*



"I AM . . ."

"I am he" *Jn. 8:24, 28; 13:19; 18:5*

"...the bread of life" *Jn. 6:35, 51*

"...the light of the world" *Jn. 8:12*

"...the resurrection" *Jn. 11:25*

"...the way, truth, life" *Jn. 14:6*

TEMPLE

Dwelling place of God *Ex. 40:34-45*



BODY OF CHRIST

God present in Christ *Jn. 2:21;4:21*

JEWISH FEASTS

Passover

Cleansing of leaven *Ex. 12:19*

Sacrificial Lamb *Ex. 12:15*

Passover Meal *Ex. 12*



NEW MEANING IN CHRIST

Cleansing of Temple *Jn. 2*

Lamb of God *Jn. 1:29; 19:14, 36*

Last Supper *Jn. 13 - 17*

Tabernacles/Booths

Giving of Law *Ex. 20*

Pillar of fire *Ex. 13:21*

Water from rock *Ex. 17*

Bronze serpent *Num. 21:49*

Jesus' teaching *Jn. 7:14*

Light of the world *Jn. 8:12*

Living water *Jn. 7:37*

Jesus lifted up *Jn. 3:13; 8:28; 12:32*

Feast of Lights/Dedication/Hanukkah

Consecration of Temple *2 Mac. 4:54*

Lamps/Light of Law *2 Mac. 1:18-36; 10:3*

Jesus as Temple/Altar *Jn. 10:36*

Jesus reveals true light *Jn. 10:22-30*

Questions for reflection

- If Jesus were to ask you, as he did the first disciples, “What do you want?” (Jn. 1:38) how would you answer?
- Where in your life has Jesus changed water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11)? How has your faith transformed something ordinary into something extraordinary?
- What is the “temple” of our culture today? If Jesus came to that temple, what would he say or do?
- Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to the wind, something that cannot be controlled (Jn. 3:8). Who do you know who is open to the Spirit’s movement in their lives? How do you recognize the Spirit’s movement in them?
- Jesus broke several taboos in speaking with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:1-42). What barriers (cultural, social, ethnic, etc.) do you find it difficult to break through? Who do you find it difficult to relate to? How might Jesus respond?
- Jesus helped the woman at the well discover what she was truly thirsting for (Jn. 4:4-42). What do you thirst for at this point in your life?
- The royal official was told to trust that his son was healed simply by Jesus’ word (Jn. 4:50). When have you, or someone you know, had to trust God even when all the circumstances seemed impossible?
- When asked if he wanted to get well, the man at the Pool of Bethesda gave an excuse (Jn. 5:6-7). When have you found it difficult to do what was necessary to change your life? What eventually helped you?
- Jesus speaks of three witnesses that demonstrate the truth of his words and actions (5:31-45). What “witnesses” (people, events, etc.) have helped to confirm your faith?
- Jesus feeds five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, with twelve baskets left over (Jn. 6:1-14). When have you experienced the abundance of God’s blessing in your life? How did you respond?
- Many of Jesus’ followers could not accept his teaching about his body being real food and his blood being real drink (Jn. 6:35-66). What do you do when you have questions or doubts?
- Jesus treats the woman caught in adultery with dignity, understanding and forgiveness (Jn. 8:2-11). How do you treat others when they fail? How do you treat yourself when you fail?
- The religious leaders could not accept Jesus because of their preconceived ideas about God and about how God acts (Jn. 8:12-59). How has your image of God changed over the years?
- Jesus says that the man’s blindness was not a curse from God but an opportunity for God’s work to be displayed in his life (Jn. 9:3). How has God’s work been displayed in your life? When has God used a disability, failure or weakness to do good for you or another?
- When questioned, the man born blind points to his own personal experience as the foundation for his faith in Christ: “I was blind, and now I see” (Jn. 9:25). What in your own life would you point to as evidence for your faith?

Questions for reflection, cont.

- What helps you recognize the Good Shepherd's voice (Jn. 10:1-5)?
- Martha is challenged to believe that her brother will rise again (Jn. 11:17-27). When have you been faced with a situation that tested your faith? How did you respond? What did you learn?
- Where in your life are you, like Lazarus, dead, lifeless, without hope (Jn. 11:38-44)? Where do you need Jesus to call you forth and give you new hope?
- Jesus tells those around Lazarus to "unbind him and set him free" (Jn. 11:44). Who do you know who needs your help and support to recover from a difficult situation or to grow in their faith?
- Mary anointed Jesus with costly ointment (Jn. 12:1-3). What precious gift do you have that could be used to "bless the body of Christ"? How are you using it?
- Peter found it difficult to allow Jesus to wash his feet (Jn. 13:1-10). Do you ever find it hard to forgive yourself or others? Do you ever find it difficult to accept God's forgiveness? What helps you eventually accept it?
- After washing his disciples' feet, Jesus commands them to do what he has done (Jn. 13:12-17). How do you wash other's feet?
- At the Last Supper, Jesus calls his disciples to demonstrate their love for him by laying down their lives for one another (Jn. 13:34 - 14:31). How do you see Christians doing this today?
- In the image of the vine and branches (Jn. 15:1-8), Jesus emphasizes the importance of remaining connected to him and to one another. What makes it challenging for you to remain connected to the vine? What may need to be pruned to help you bear more fruit?
- Jesus promises that he will pray and the Father will send the Holy Spirit to dwell within the disciples (Jn. 14:15 - 16:15). How do you experience the Holy Spirit in your life?
- Pilate mockingly asks Jesus, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38). How would you answer that question? What helps you discern truth?
- In light of Jesus' words earlier in the Gospel, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son," (Jn. 3:16), what does Jesus' death on the cross mean to you?
- Jesus' first words to the disciples after the resurrection are, "Peace be with you." He then gives them the power to forgive others (Jn. 20:19-23). How does your faith in the resurrection give you peace? How does it make it possible for you to forgive other people?
- Jesus does not condemn Thomas' doubt, but invites him to touch his wounds (Jn. 20:24-29). How can the woundedness of the body of Christ, the church, deepen our faith in Jesus' death and resurrection?
- Jesus used the miraculous catch of fish to help the disciples recognize him after his resurrection. What signs do you see that help you recognize that the risen Christ is active in the world today?
- In what ways would Peter's denial and Jesus' forgiveness (Jn. 21:15-23) help make Peter a better disciple? A better leader? How has God's love and forgiveness changed you?

Resources for further study

An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown

Chapter 6: *The Gospels in General; the Synoptic Gospels in Particular*

Chapter 11: *The Gospel According to John*

Doubleday

The New Jerome Bible Handbook

Chapter 60: *The Gospel According to John*

Liturgical Press

The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John - Vol. 1 & 2

Raymond E. Brown

Doubleday

Reading the New Testament

PHEME PERKINS

Chapter 13: John: Jesus, The Divine Word

Paulist Press

The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary

Raymond E. Brown

Liturgical Press

The Community of the Beloved Disciple

Raymond E. Brown

Paulist Press

The Gospel According to John & the Johannine Epistles

Collegeville Bible Commentary Series, New Testament #4

Liturgical Press

“Do You Love Me?” Jesus Questions the Church

Michael H. Crosby

Orbis Books

Becoming Children of God: John’s Gospel and Radical Discipleship

Wes Howard-Brook

Orbis Books

The Beginnings of the Church

Fr. Frederick Cwiekowski

Paulist Press