

# **God's Greatest Gift**

By Byron Fike

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## Preface

Many men and women have left their imprint on the pages of history. By their accomplishments, for good or for evil, they impacted the lives of those living in their society and future societies.

You are about to embark on a study of a man who changed history in a way that no other individual ever has or ever will.

What was it about this man that separates him from all the other notable historical figures? Why have people for 2,000 years been willing to sacrifice everything, sometimes even their lives to follow this man and his teachings?

You will be studying the account written by one of Jesus' closest followers, John. In this study guide you will be asked to read every verse of John, taking note of some of your thoughts as you read. There is also a glossary of terms in the back of the book explaining some of the words used by John.

To get the most out of this study guide, do all of the activities as instructed. These will be easily identified by **bold type**. If you want to dig deeper into the Gospel of John, I recommend two books: Leon Morris's *The Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans) and Merrill C. Tenney's *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Eerdmans).

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# Lesson 1

## The Central Message of the Bible

### *The Uniqueness of the Bible*

The Bible is unlike any other book in all the world. It is actually a collection of sixty-six books written over a period of approximately 1,500 years by around 40 different authors. These authors came from many walks of life. Some were kings and others were fishermen. There were also poets, statesmen, scholars, shepherds and farmers. Some of the books were written in palaces and some in prison. The books were written to a variety of destinations and cultures.

The Bible also contains many different types of literature, including narrative, poetry, law, apocalyptic, prophecy, general letters, personal letters, fable and parable. Three languages were used in writing the Bible. The Old Testament was written primarily in *Hebrew* with a few parts in *Aramaic*. The New Testament was written in *Greek*. Most Bible readers today are dependent upon translations of the Bible into their language.

The most unique feature of the Bible is that, in spite of all this diversity, the Bible tells *one story* from start to finish. The main character in this story is God and the central message of the Bible is what God accomplished through his son Jesus.

### *Major Divisions of the Bible*

There are some basic facts concerning the Bible that need to be understood before we get into the Bible's message. Your Bible is divided into two major parts called the Old Testament and the New Testament. "Testament," as it is used here, does not mean "last will and testament." The word "covenant" would be a more accurate term. A covenant is a binding agreement or contract between two parties.

There are two major covenants in the Bible. The first was a national covenant made between God and the nation of Israel. The making of this covenant is recorded in Exodus 19:1-8. God promised to be Israel's God, and Israel promised to obey everything God said. God gave Israel his law so that they could live as His people. An important part of this law was animal sacrifices to provide forgiveness for sinful disobedience to God.

The second major covenant in the Bible is a universal covenant which God offers to all humans. This covenant replaced the covenant with Israel which is now known appropriately as the "old covenant." Since the

national covenant is now obsolete, the universal covenant is known as the "new covenant." (One place in the Bible that discusses this is Hebrews 8:7-13.) The Old Testament was written to people under the old covenant. The New Testament was written to people under the new covenant.

### *Minor Divisions of the Two Testaments*

The Old Testament contains 39 books which can be divided into four parts.

1. *Books of Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.* These books tell us about the creation of all things, the formation of the nation of Israel, and the laws that were given by God to govern Israel.
2. *Books of History: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.* These books tell the history of Israel from the conquest of the land of Canaan to the close of the Old Testament period.
3. *Books of Poetry: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.* These books were all written using a variety of poetic styles.
4. *Books of Prophecy: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel* are called major prophets because of the size of their books. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are called minor prophets. The prophets were the preachers of Israel. They communicated God's words to Israel and often called upon the people to change their ways and return to God. At times the prophets would also predict the future. Some of their prophecies concerned the coming of Jesus.

The New Testament can also be divided into four parts.

1. *Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.* These are the books that tell the story of Jesus.
2. *History: Acts.* Acts chronicles the history of the first 30 years of the church's existence. It tells the story of how the message of Jesus spread rapidly around the known world after Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven.
3. *Letters: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus,*

*Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John and Jude.* These were letters written to churches and individuals for their encouragement to live as followers of Jesus.

4. *Prophecy: Revelation.* Revelation was written to seven churches in Asia who were undergoing a terrible time of persecution because of their faith in Jesus. It was written to encourage them to remain faithful to Jesus no matter what. The author offers the suffering Christians hope by telling them about the future return of Jesus to the earth.

### *The Bible's One Story*

All through the Old Testament there is a message that “someone is coming.” These are numerous hints and prophecies concerning this individual and those who read these books were filled with anticipation regarding this mysterious individual that God was going to send into the world.

**Read the following scriptures and briefly note what they say about this “coming one.”**

**Genesis 12:1-3**

**Deuteronomy 18:17-18**

**Micah 5:2**

**Isaiah 53:1-6**

When Jesus was born, angels announced that he was the long awaited one, the Messiah (or Christ). Messiah means God’s anointed king.

**Read Luke 2:8-11 to see this announcement.** The Gospels tell the central message of the Bible as they record Jesus’ ministry on earth. The climax of his work is his death and resurrection from the dead. Forty days after he rose from the dead he ascended into heaven with the promise to return to earth some day. Just as in the Old Testament the message was “someone is coming”, the New Testament proclaims “someone is coming again.” The difference is that now we know who that someone is; it is the Lord Jesus Christ! The following lessons are to help you come to know him and what he has done for you.

## Lesson 2

### Gospel of John (chapter 1)

#### *Why Did John Write His Gospel?*

Every author has a reason for writing. John tells his readers why he wrote the things he did. **Read John 20:30-31. What reason does John give for writing this book?**

There are three key words in these two verses. These words appear several times in John's book: signs, belief, and life.

**Read back over John 20:30-31 and notice how these words are used and how they build upon one another.** The *signs* are the miracles Jesus does. While in other Gospels many miracles are recorded, John selects seven and tells us a great deal about each miracle. John wants the reader to see the miracles as signs that point to Jesus' identity. That is why the signs create *belief*. The specific belief the signs create is that Jesus is the Son of God. When one comes to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, he can have *life*. True life is only found through belief in Jesus.

There are a number of ideas about what it means to believe in Jesus. It is best, at this point, to let John define his meaning. Since belief is his main point, he will return to this topic frequently.

You may not yet be a believer in Jesus. Whether you are or not, most people have some ideas about what it means to believe. Try to put those ideas aside while you study John so that you can understand what John is teaching. Then you can re-examine your own ideas in light of what you have learned from John.

#### *The Prologue*

Most books begin with an introduction, and John is no different. Many people find John's prologue to be the most difficult part of his book.

**Read John 1:1-18 and see if you can determine John's subject.**

If you had trouble determining John's subject, don't be discouraged. As I said, this is a difficult part of John's book. John begins by talking about the word. In 1:14 John tells us the word became flesh, or in other words, the word became a human. It is not until 1:17 that John tells us the name of this "word"—Jesus.

**Now, re-read John 1:1-18 and make a list of all the claims John is making concerning Jesus.** I'll write down a few just to get you started.

**Claims about Jesus**

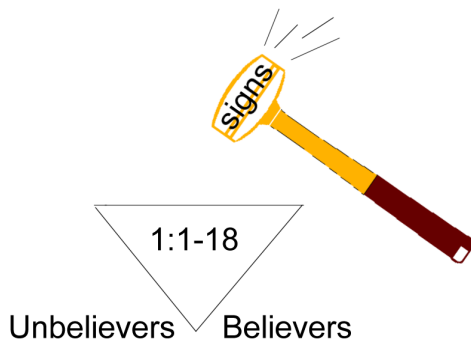
1:1 Jesus was with God in the beginning

1:1 Jesus is God

1:3 All things were made through him

John is making some powerful claims! Among other things, John claims that Jesus is God, everything was made through Jesus, Jesus is life, Jesus gives believers the right to become God's children, and Jesus makes God known. There had better be some strong proof for someone making those kinds of claims! That is why John calls Jesus' miracles "signs." The miracles are John's proof that everything he claims about Jesus is true.

As you continue to read the book, you will notice that people are divided into two camps: believers and non-believers. It begins slowly at first, but, by the end of the book, even the reader has been drawn into the struggle to discern Jesus' identity. Everyone, it seems, falls into one camp or the other. This can be illustrated with the following diagram.



The miracles of Jesus are the hammer, and the claims made about Jesus in the prologue are the wedge. Whenever you read about Jesus doing a miracle in John's Gospel, it is another blow on the wedge that separates believers from unbelievers.

### *Personal Testimonies*

Before John presents any of Jesus' miracles, he first gives the reader some personal testimonies concerning Jesus. **Read the scriptures noted below and write down the testimony given by each of these individuals concerning the identity of Jesus.**

**John the Baptist (John 1:19-34)**

**Andrew (John 1:35-42)**

**Philip (John 1:43-45)**

**Nathanael (John 1:46-51)**

## Lesson 3

### Gospel of John (chapter 2-3)

#### *The First Sign*

**Read John 2:1-11.** What is Jesus' first miraculous sign? What power is demonstrated by Jesus? Record your answers on the chart entitled "The Seven Signs" on page 35.

At a wedding the focus is on the couple getting married. In John's narrative of this wedding, however, he doesn't even tell us the name of the bride and groom! His attention is placed entirely upon Jesus and his incredible miracle.

Two elements are absolutely essential in wine making: grapes and time. Jesus showed his power over created things when he made the best of wine using only water. If all things have truly been created by Jesus (as John told us in 1:3), then changing 120 to 180 gallons of water into wine in a moment's time should be an easy task.

The first blow of the hammer has hit the wedge. If the claims John has made concerning Jesus in 1:1-18 are true, we should expect him to do some pretty astonishing things. Notice in 2:11 that his disciples put their faith in him on the basis of this miracle.

#### *Jesus Cleanses the Temple*

**Read John 2:12-22.** Jesus was upset at what was happening in God's house, the temple. The purpose of the temple was to be a place of prayer and communion with God. The animals were being sold to be used in sacrifices, and money was exchanged so that people could pay the temple tax with the proper currency. Jesus saw the whole process as disruptive and destroying the very purpose for which the temple existed. Notice that when the Jewish religious leaders demanded a sign from Jesus showing his authority to do this, he refused. If anyone wants to learn who Jesus is, he or she must follow, watch and listen to him. Jesus never did a miracle as a performance. He never set up a tent and advertised that a miracle service was going to be held. Jesus did plenty of miracles, but only those who were paying attention saw them.

**What do you think Jesus was talking about when he said "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days"? (Read 2:19-22 again.)**

### *Jesus Talks to Nicodemus*

**Read John 2:23-3:9.** John's statement that Jesus "did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man" (2:25) is the introduction to Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. **Based on the information found in 3:1-2, how would you describe Nicodemus?**

**What do you think Jesus meant by saying that one must be "born again" in 3:3?**

Being born again is absolutely vital according to Jesus. Unless one is born again, he *cannot* enter the kingdom of God (3:5). Being in the kingdom means that one has Jesus as his ruler. Such is impossible unless one is born again. **Why do you think this is true?**

This rebirth Jesus talks about is spiritual in nature rather than physical (3:4-8). It involves both water and God's Spirit. Water would be the baptism a person undergoes when he decides to be born again. God's Spirit is like the wind. The effects of the Spirit on one's life are obvious, but understanding exactly how the Spirit works to change a person's life is often difficult to understand. God accomplishes his work by means of his Spirit. Your part in the process is to allow God's Spirit to work in your life.

**Read John 3:10-21.** This is the essence of the Gospel. In 3:14 Jesus refers to an incident in the Old Testament where God sent snakes among the rebellious Israelites. When the people cried out to God to save them, he instructed Moses to build a bronze snake and place it on a pole. Everyone who looked upon the snake (showing their faith and trust in God) was cured and lived. Everyone who did not trust God enough to do this, died (Numbers 21:4-9). **How does this relate to Jesus being "lifted up" (3:14)?**

**In your own words what does 3:16 mean?**

In 3:17-18 Jesus explained that the purpose of his coming was not to condemn. Everyone is already condemned. Jesus came to save people from condemnation. John 3:18 is the beginning of a number of statements made by Jesus showing the contrast between those who believe and those who do not believe. Those who believe are not condemned while those who do not believe remain in their state of condemnation. From this narrative we learn that belief in Jesus means that one must be born again and that one must accept Jesus as God's means of saving us from condemnation.

## More Testimony from John the Baptist

**Read John 3:22-36.** John recognized that his role was one of preparation. He prepared the way for Jesus to come into the world. Now that Jesus has come, John will fade into the background. **What is the contrast between belief and unbelief John mentions in 3:36?**

## Lesson 4 Gospel of John (chapter 4-5)

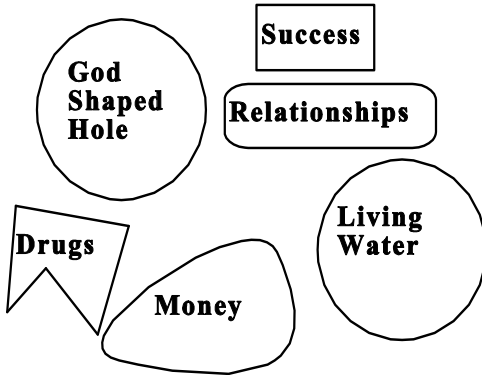
### *The Samaritan Woman*

**Read John 4:1-26. How would you describe this woman? How does she compare with Nicodemus?**

Samaritans were half Jewish and half Gentile. They worshiped the same God as the Jews but only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament as Scripture. They built a temple on Mount Gerizim rather than use the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Jews and Samaritans hated one another and did not have much contact with one another.

Jesus offers the woman living water (4:10-14). **What do you think he is talking about?**

When Jesus asked her to call her husband, he brought up a painful subject. This woman had been a failure at relationships. Obviously, she had been trying to fill a void in her life by relationships with men. She was an empty, hurting woman. Or, in other words, she was thirsty. Jesus said that he could give her what she was thirsting after. We all have an emptiness inside that we try to fill in a variety of ways. It's as though each of us has a *God shaped hole* in our lives. We try to fill our emptiness but find that our deepest needs are not really met. We all need the living water Jesus offers. God himself fills the emptiness in our lives. He fits perfectly!



Jesus always tells people exactly what they need to hear. He told Nicodemus that he must be born again. Nicodemus had reached the highest level of a religious leader among the Jews. For him to follow Jesus and have eternal life, he must begin all over again. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that he would give her living water. She had lived with rejection, emptiness and disappointment. Jesus had the answer for her painful condition and was willing to give it to her.

**Do you relate better to Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman?**

**Why?**

**Read John 4:27-42. What caused the woman to believe? What caused the Samaritans to believe?**

### *The Second Sign*

**Read John 4:43-54.** Notice that Jesus is in Cana and the sick boy is in Capernaum, about 18 miles away. For Jesus it doesn't matter if the boy is 18 inches away or 18 miles away. He demonstrates the power to heal from a distance. **Make a note of the miracle and the power demonstrated by Jesus on the "Seven Signs" chart on page 35.**

The man had gone to a lot of trouble to find Jesus in Cana. After hearing of the terrible sickness the man's son was experiencing, Jesus simply told him to go home. The man was just to believe that his son was better based on nothing more than Jesus' word. Remember that *belief* is John's primary objective in writing. Here we gain an insight into what it means to believe in Jesus. Believing means taking Jesus at his word. If Jesus says something, his believers trust that he is right regardless of what others might say.

### *The Third Sign*

**Read John 5:1-15.** This poor man had been an invalid for 38 years. For Jesus it didn't matter if he had been in this condition 38 seconds or 38 years. Jesus demonstrated power over time. **Make a note of the miracle and the power demonstrated by Jesus on the "Seven Signs" chart on page 35.**

**Why do you think Jesus asked the man if he wanted to get well?**

**Why did Jesus ask the man to pick up his mat?**

The Jewish leaders are upset with Jesus because he is not keeping their interpretation of the Sabbath. **Read John 5:16-30. What claims does Jesus make in regards to his relationship with the Father?**

**Read John 5:31-47. Why did Jesus say these people did not believe in him?**

## Lesson 5

### Gospel of John (chapter 6-8)

#### *The Fourth Sign*

**Read John 6:1-15.** Jesus demonstrated his power over quantity. **Make a note of the miracle and the power demonstrated by Jesus on the "Seven Signs" chart on page 35. What was the test Jesus gave to Philip in 6:5-6? What did Jesus want Philip to understand?**

After the miracle, the 5,000 are amazed and want to make Jesus their king. Jesus knew that they were not really prepared to commit themselves to following him but instead wanted him to do their bidding. Therefore, Jesus left and went into the mountains by himself.

#### *The Fifth Sign*

**Read John 6:16-24.** Jesus suspended the law of gravity enabling him to walk on water. If it is true that "through him all things were made," (1:3) he can change the laws of nature when he wishes. **Make a note of the miracle and the power demonstrated by Jesus on the "Seven Signs" chart on page 35.**

**Read John 6:25-59.** God gave the Israelites a bread-like substance called "manna" which they ate for 40 years while living in the desert. Jesus said that he is the bread God has sent. Eating manna would keep one physically alive for a while. Eating God's new bread, Jesus, will give one eternal life.

There are seven claims Jesus makes in the Gospel of John that begin with the statement, "I am." The first of these are found in 6:35. **Record this claim and its significance on the chart found on page 36.**

**Why do the people not understand what Jesus is saying? (Notice their statements in 6:28, 30-31, 34, 41, 52.)**

When you eat food, it is digested and eventually enters your blood stream and becomes a part of you. Jesus used graphic language to try and communicate what it means to believe in him. He actually becomes a part of his believers. Feeding on him does not just keep one alive for a short time but for all eternity. *Believing in Jesus means allowing him to live inside you.*

**Read John 6:60-71. Why did many of his disciples leave? (Look again at Jesus' statements in 6:64-65 and 6:44-45.)**

After the multitude left, Jesus asked the 12 if they also wanted to leave. Jesus certainly didn't want them to go, but he knew that, unless they were willing to be totally committed to him, it would be impossible for them to really believe. Peter demonstrated true belief when he proclaimed that only Jesus had the words of eternal life (6:68-69). Even though Peter doesn't understand everything about Jesus, he is getting a handle on what it means to believe in Jesus.

*Confusion Concerning Jesus' Identity*

**As you read John 7:1-52, take note of the various opinions about Jesus.**

<b><i>Passage</i></b>	<b><i>Person(s) involved</i></b>	<b><i>Question, belief or statement about Jesus</i></b>
7:3-5		
7:12		
7:20		
7:25-27		
7:31		
7:40-42		
7:45-46		
7:50-52		

## **What are Jesus' claims in 7:16-19?**

It is becoming obvious that not everyone agreed who Jesus was, but everyone agreed that Jesus could not be ignored.

### *The Compassion of Jesus*

**Read John 8:1-11.** [This is one of the few passages in the Bible where there is some question about its authenticity. Most conservative scholars agree that, even if this section was not originally in John's Gospel, it is a true story concerning Jesus.] This whole scene looks like a set-up. Adultery can only be committed by two people. The Pharisees claim to have caught the woman "in the very act," yet they did not bring the guilty man. These religious leaders were not interested in cleaning up the immorality of their nation. They wanted to trap Jesus.

The Law of Moses did command that both guilty partners in adultery were to be executed (see Leviticus 20:10). However, Israel was not a free country at the time of Jesus. The Romans were in charge and did not allow the Jews to practice the death penalty. The dilemma placed before Jesus was to either disregard Moses' law by saying "let her go" or to subject himself to the wrath of the Romans by saying "stone her." When Jesus turned the attention from the woman and himself to those who were trying to trap him, all the woman's accusers left. Since there were no witnesses, the woman was free to go.

### **How is the compassion of Jesus seen in this narrative?**

## Lesson 6

### Gospel of John (chapter 8-10)

#### *Jesus' Teaching is Challenged*

**Read John 8:12. Record the claim Jesus is making on the chart found on page 36.**

**Read John 8:13-30 and make a note of the claims Jesus made.**

Many are beginning to believe in Jesus. However, rather than leaving them in this elementary stage of belief, Jesus challenges them to take the next step of faith. **Read John 8:31-59. Why did the Jews get angry with Jesus?**

**Why did Jesus tell them the things that he did?**

Twice now, we have seen Jesus deeply offend those who believed in him (6:60, 66; 8:3, 59). Belief in Jesus is much more than intellectual assent to doctrinal statements. *Belief in Jesus means listening to him and trusting that what he says is true.* That trust becomes the foundation for living a life committed to him. Jesus offended these believers because they were not open to what Jesus had to say. In other words, they did not truly trust Jesus. Since trust is so hard to develop, Jesus did another miracle proving once again that everything he said was true.

## *The Sixth Sign*

**Read John 9:1-7.** Jesus' disciples saw this man as an opportunity to ask Jesus a tricky theological question. Jesus saw the man as a person in need of help. Jesus said that the man was not blind because of sin as was popularly taught. The cause of the man's blindness is not disclosed.

It was simply one of many misfortunes that happen in our sin-stained, imperfect world. Jesus' statement in 9:3 might mean that the man's blindness presented an opportunity for the works of God to be displayed rather than saying that God made the man blind so that Jesus could heal him. **Note the miracle and power demonstrated on the "Seven Signs" chart on page 35.**

**Why do you think Jesus put mud on the man's eyes and told him to go to a certain pool to wash it off?**

**What would have happened if the man had refused or had washed the mud off at home? What does this teach us about what it means to believe in Jesus?**

The man who was formerly blind went through a number of challenges after his healing. Each time he was challenged, he was forced to think and rethink about what had happened to him. During this process of challenge and thinking, the man developed faith in Jesus.

**While reading John 9:8-38, complete the chart below, noting the development of the man's faith in Jesus.**

<i>Passage</i>	<i>Challenge or Question</i>	<i>Statement about Jesus</i>
9:10-11		
9:15-17		
9:24-25		
9:26-33		
9:35-38		

**Read John 9:39-41.** The Pharisees gave the appearance of having their lives all together. They refused to admit their own sinfulness and as a consequence saw no need to believe in Jesus. If they could have admitted their own needs ("blindness"), they could have been forgiven. By their stubborn refusal to admit the truth about themselves, they remained guilty. Many people never believe in Jesus because of their refusal to admit the truth about themselves.

### *Jesus the Good Shepherd*

**Read John 10:1-18.** Jesus mixes his metaphors several times in this passage. He presents himself as the shepherd of his sheep as well as the gate that the sheep enter through to find safety (salvation). **Record these claims on the chart on page 36.** The thief, robber and hired hand probably represent the religious leaders who did not truly love the people.

**What is it about the Good Shepherd that makes him good?**

**Read John 10:19-21.** There is much discussion concerning the identity of Jesus. He sounds like a crazy man to many, but it is getting increasingly more difficult to ignore his miracles.

### *The Struggle to Believe*

**Read John 10:22-42.** Jesus plainly claimed to be one with the Father. For this the Jews attempted to stone him. Jesus answered by quoting Psalm 82:6. In this psalm God calls Israel's judges "gods." This did not mean that they were divine but that they had been given the awesome task of deciding guilt or innocence. The judges of Psalm 82 had failed to be godly judges and were told that they would die like mere men.

Jesus in essence said that if God could call *these* wicked men "gods," why would he not call the one he sent to do his work in the world God's son? Jesus told these opponents of his to judge him based upon his work. The miraculous signs lead one to believe that Jesus is God's son.

## Lesson 7

### Gospel of John (chapter 11-12)

#### *The Seventh Sign*

**Read John 11:1-16.** The final blow of the hammer separating believers from unbelievers is about to occur. Jesus purposefully waited two days after hearing about the serious illness his friend Lazarus was experiencing. After Lazarus died, Jesus returned to Bethany. The disciples were not eager to return to a place where there was so much hatred toward Jesus, but they were committed to following Jesus wherever he went.

**Read John 11:17-37. What did Jesus mean by his statement in 11:25-26? Make a note of this claim on the chart on page 36.**

The shortest verse in all the Bible is John 11:35, "Jesus wept." He was not weeping for the loss of Lazarus for he knew that he was about to raise him from the dead. Jesus was weeping because of his compassion toward those who were experiencing the deep, emotional grief of losing one they loved. Jesus understands our deep emotional hurts and at times weeps along with us.

**Read John 11:38-44 and complete the final blanks on the "Seven Signs" chart on page 35. Based on what you have seen thus far in the Book of John, how do you think people will respond to this miraculous sign?**

**Now read John 11:45-57 and see if you're correct.**

This final sign has driven the wedge in deep. Many have become believers in Jesus because of the signs. Those who refuse to believe are now acting in an absurd manner. They are afraid that if Jesus is allowed to continue to perform these great miracles, everyone will come to believe in him. If that happens, they suppose, then the Romans will consider it a threat to their power and come and destroy the entire nation of Israel. For the religious leaders to stay in power, they must destroy Jesus now!

Caiaphas, the high priest, made a statement implying that it would be better if Jesus were destroyed now than to let him continue to gain followers which would cause the Romans to destroy the nation. However, John tells us that God was speaking through Caiaphas by means of prophecy saying that Jesus' death would be a substitutionary death for the Jewish nation as well as all people.

**Re-read John 3:18, 36 and 5:24.**

*When Jesus died he accepted your condemnation and the wrath of God that you deserved. Because of Jesus' death, you can have eternal life when you come to truly believe in Jesus.*

### *The Anointing of Jesus' Feet*

**Read John 12:1-8.** What Jesus desires above everything else is that people come to know him and love him. Mary loved Jesus deeply and demonstrated her love by honoring him with her most valued possession.

Judas complained that Mary was being extravagant. John exposed the true motivation of Judas as being that of self-interest. Jesus used the occasion to explain that he would soon be leaving.

### *The Absurdity of Unbelief*

**Read John 12:9-19.** The struggle between belief and unbelief is intensifying. Jesus' enemies are now so committed to their position of unbelief that they decide they must kill Lazarus because his resurrection from the dead has caused many to believe in Jesus. The verse, "*There is none so blind as those who refuse to see,*" seems especially appropriate as a commentary on these stubborn men.

**Read John 12:20-36.** Jesus did not want to die but realized that he must die to fulfill God's purpose for him coming to earth. **What do you think Jesus meant by his statement in 12:23-26?**

### *The End of Jesus' Public Ministry*

Jesus' public ministry comes to a close in chapter 12. He has made many claims concerning his identity and done many miraculous signs to back up his claims. These closing verses of chapter 12 demonstrate once again the struggle to believe. **Read John 12:37-43. Why are the leaders who believe in Jesus afraid to publicly acknowledge their belief?**

**How could this be a problem for you?**

**Read John 12:44-50.** This is a good summary paragraph of what Jesus has been saying all along. **Summarize what you think Jesus' message is in one or two sentences.**

## Lesson 8

### Gospel of John (chapter 13-17)

#### *Overview of Chapters 13-17*

The material in chapters 1-12 covers about three years of Jesus' life. In contrast, the material in chapters 13-17 covers only a few hours of one very significant evening in Jesus' life. His public ministry is over, and now he seeks to communicate some very important ideas to his closest followers.

#### *Jesus' Last Supper*

**Read John 13:1-17.** In Jesus' day it was customary for a host to have the feet of his guests washed when they arrived at his home. This was the job of the lowest of slaves. When Jesus and his disciples arrived at this room, there was a basin, water and a towel provided--but there was no slave! **Why did Jesus wash their feet?**

**Read John 13:18-38.** Jesus was deeply troubled with the knowledge that Judas, one of his disciples, would betray him to his enemies. After Judas left, Jesus began to talk freely about his departure and what he expected from his friends after he had gone. Jesus said he was giving them a "new" command in 13:34. However, the command to "love one another" was very old (see Leviticus 19:18). What was new was the command *to love as Jesus had loved them*. This would be evidence that they were really Jesus' disciples.

**How does truly loving one another serve as evidence that one is following Jesus?**

*Jesus is the Way*

**Read John 14:1-14. What is the significance of Jesus' statement in 14:6? Record this claim on the chart on page 36.**

**How had Jesus shown the Father to the disciples?**

John 14:13-14 is among the most difficult verses for us to understand (see also 15:7, 16; 16:23-28). It is important to keep in mind that asking in Jesus' name means that one is asking in accordance with God's will.

*What it Means to Love Jesus*

**Read John 14:15-31. What is the evidence that one loves Jesus?**

**How did Jesus demonstrate that he loved the Father?**

### *The Vine and the Branches*

**Read John 15:1-17.** Record this claim on the chart on page 36. A branch receives everything it needs for life from the vine. By staying connected to the vine, the branch bears fruit. By bearing fruit, one shows that he is connected to Jesus. The only specific fruit Jesus mentioned in this context is in 15:12-17. **Why is Jesus emphasizing the fact that his disciples are to love one another?**

### *Jesus' Disciples Will Be Hated*

**Read John 15:18-16:4.** Why will Jesus' disciples be hated?

### *The Work of the Holy Spirit*

**Read John 16:5-16.** The purpose of the Spirit coming is to convict the world of sin and the coming judgment. The Spirit would also work to guide these disciples into all truth (see 14:26). After Jesus left, people would turn to these eleven men to know the message of Jesus and to know Jesus' teachings. The Spirit would be the one guiding them in this awesome responsibility.

**Read John 16:17-33.** Jesus reassured them that, even though he is leaving, they will see him again.

## *Jesus' Prayer*

The longest recorded prayer of Jesus is found in John 17. The prayer can be divided into three sections. **As you read John 17:1-26, record what Jesus asked for in each of these sections.**

**Jesus' Prayer for Himself (17:1-5) -**

**Jesus' Prayer for His Disciples (17:6-19) -**

**Jesus' Prayer for All Believers (17:20-26) –**

## Lesson 9

### Gospel of John (chapter 18-21)

#### *The Arrest and Trial of Jesus*

**Read John 18:1-11.** Jesus didn't act like a criminal. He didn't hide or try to resist arrest. Perhaps this is why the soldiers fell over themselves. How different Jesus was from every other man they had taken into custody. Jesus knew that his time had come to complete the work the Father sent him to do.

**Read John 18:12-40.** Mixed into the narrative of Jesus' trial before Jewish and Roman authorities is the account of Peter's denial of Jesus. Jesus had earlier told Peter that this would happen (13:37-38). Peter had been confident that he would willingly die for Jesus. **Why do you think Peter denied Jesus? How could one deny Jesus today?**

**Read John 19:1-16.** Pilate had been appointed governor over Palestine by the Roman emperor. It was a difficult job, as the Jews of Palestine were constantly rebelling against Roman authority. Even though Pilate knew that Jesus had done nothing deserving of death, he was afraid of the people. The last straw seemed to be when the people threatened to inform Caesar that Pilate did not effectively deal with someone claiming to be king.

#### *The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus*

**Read John 19:17-37.** Death by crucifixion was a horribly slow and painful death. The victim would have to push himself upward with his legs to catch his breath and would finally die of suffocation when he was too exhausted to push himself up any longer. The soldiers broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus in an effort to hasten their deaths. When the professional executioners came to Jesus, however, they saw that he was already dead and, instead of breaking his legs, they stabbed him in the side with a spear.

Jesus had spoken often concerning his death. **Re-read the following passages and take note of what Jesus had said about his death.**

**John 3:14 -**

**John 8:28 -**

**John 10:11-18 -**

**John 12:23-28 -**

**John 12:32-33 -**

### *Jesus' Burial*

**Read John 19:38-42.** Jesus was buried according to the custom of his day. His body was wrapped in a burial cloth along with spices and laid in a new tomb. A large stone was rolled across the entrance. The day of his death was on Friday.

### *The Empty Tomb*

**Read John 20:1-9.** Mary thought a terrible thing had happened! Jesus' body had been stolen from the tomb. What other possible explanation could there be? Jesus had spoken of this event earlier in rather mysterious language when he had said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (2:19). Nobody could have possibly understood what he meant at the time he spoke these words. However, as John explains, Jesus' disciples would understand these words later (2:21-22).

### *Jesus Had Risen from the Dead*

**Read John 20:10-31.** Poor Thomas. Everyone had seen the risen Lord but him. He thought they were all crazy with wishful thinking. He refused to believe unless he saw unmistakable evidence. When Jesus appeared to the disciples a second time, he gave Thomas what he needed to believe, and Thomas gave the most complete confession of Jesus' identity in the entire book. Thomas called Jesus "my Lord" showing that

he recognized Jesus as the master of his life, and then he called him "my God" showing that, because of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, everything Jesus had said about his relationship to the Father was true. As John had said in his prologue, Jesus is God (1:1).

Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who believe without seeing. It is at this point in the book that John reveals why he wrote the book: so that those who have not seen Jesus with their physical eyes might come to believe in him because of the testimony of others.

**Record your thoughts about Jesus after having examined the testimony of others and the words and actions of Jesus.**

### *One Final Appearance of Jesus*

**Read John 21:1-25.** Jesus asked Peter three times if Peter loved him. Three times Peter replied that he did. Each time Jesus told Peter to take care of his sheep. Even though Peter had failed in standing up for Jesus, he was not rejected by Jesus. Jesus forgave him and had a very important mission for Peter to accomplish. Many years after this event, Peter died for his faith just as Jesus said that he would. **What do Jesus' words to Peter teach us about the character and nature of Jesus?**

## Lesson 10

### Gospel of John: Reflections

#### *The Key Words*

In Lesson One it was noted that the three key words to John's Gospel were signs, belief and life. **What was the point of the miraculous signs Jesus performed?**

**According to what John wrote, what does it mean to believe in Jesus? How does this differ from some of your previous ideas?**

**What is the life that Jesus offers?**

## *The Rebirth*

**What would it mean for you to be born again? What would need to change in your life?**

As pointed out earlier, the water, mentioned in John 3:5, is the immersion or baptism that a person undergoes when he is ready to be born again. If you believe in Jesus as the Son of God and want to make him Lord of your life, then you are ready to be baptized in water.

When the first sermon pointing out the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection was preached, the people asked, "What shall we do?" The response: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." Read Acts 2 for the full account.

# The Seven Signs

<b>Passage in John</b>	<b>What is the sign?</b>	<b>Demonstrates Jesus power over . . .</b>
2:1-11		
4:43-54		
5:1-9		
6:1-15		
6:16-21		
9:1-7		
11:32-48		

# Jesus "I Am" Claims

<b>Scripture from John</b>	<b>Jesus' Claim' "I am...."</b>	<b>Significance</b>
6:35, 41, 48, 51		
8:12, 9:5		
10:7,9		
10:11,14		
11:25		
14:6		
15:1,5		

## Lesson 11

### The Good News of God's Grace

#### *The Word "Gospel" Means Good News*

The word "Gospel" describes both the message of Christianity and the first four books of the New Testament which contain the story of Jesus' life and teachings. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 and list the three basic elements that are at the heart of the Gospel.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### *Why Did Jesus Die?*

1 Corinthians 15:1-5 says that Jesus "died for our sins." But what does that mean? **Write a definition for sin which includes the concepts found in James 4:17 and 1 John 3:4.**

Sin occurs anytime you *substitute your will above God's will*. Whether that means doing something that you know is against God's will (sins of commission) or not doing something that you know God wants you to do (sins of omission). **Read Galatians 5:19-21 and Ephesians 5:1-5. Make a list of each sin mentioned. Use a dictionary to look up definitions of words you do not know.**

**In your opinion, how widespread is sin?**

**Compare your thoughts with Paul's statement in Romans 3:9-12, 23.**

**Read Matthew 15:19. According to Jesus, what is the source of sin?**

Later New Testament writers call this the "sinful nature" or "the flesh." All humans have a defective heart problem that causes them to turn from God and put themselves in the place of God. We think we know how best to run our lives and make decisions accordingly. God and His will are ignored or rebelled against. We follow our "sinful nature" and thus sin against God.

**Read the following verses and list what sin does to a person.**

**Isaiah 59:1-2**

**John 8:34**

**Romans 6:23**

**Hebrews 3:13**

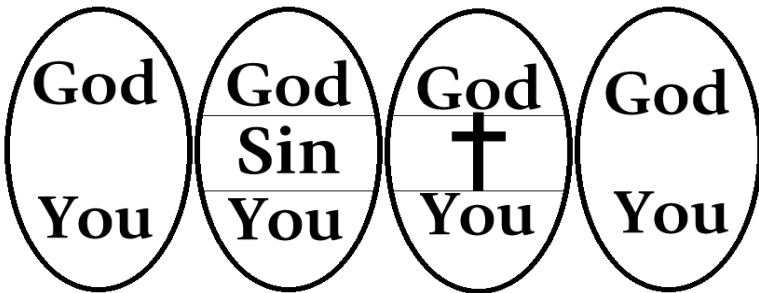
**1 John 3:8**

Everyone has a problem because of his (or her) own personal sin against God. This includes you and me! There is nothing we can do to right our wrong. We stand in desperate need of a savior. This is why Jesus came to die for our sins. He came to be your savior.

*Jesus' Death on the Cross for Your Sins is Called Grace*

God's  
 Riches  
 At  
 Christ's  
 Expense

Because of Jesus' death, your sins can be forgiven. Sin has created an immovable barrier separating you from God. The cross of Jesus becomes the bridge that brings you and God back together. By forgiving



your sins, you are brought into a relationship with God whereby you are called his son or daughter.

Notice in the above diagram that God never moves. It is your sin that separates you from him.

**Read Ephesians 2:1-10 and Romans 5:6-11 and state in your own words what God did in order to make forgiveness of sins possible.**

Justice demands punishment for sin. Jesus got what we deserved (death) so that we could receive what we needed (a new life).

## Lesson 12

### Your Response to God's Grace

**Review Lesson 11 and write in one or two sentences how the information contained in that lesson relates to you personally.**

#### *God Offers a Free Pardon from Sin*

In 1829 George Wilson was convicted in Pennsylvania of mail robbery and murder and sentenced to death. Later he was pardoned by President Andrew Jackson, but Wilson refused the pardon. Confusion reigned among all concerned with the case. Nothing like this had happened before. What were they to do with a man refusing a pardon and choosing to die on the gallows instead? Finally, the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, John Marshall, ruled: "A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the parties implicated. It is hardly to be supposed that one under the sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon. But if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must hang." George Wilson died, not because he had to, but because he refused a pardon.

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God offers a pardon to all who are guilty of sin. This pardon, called the Gospel, is either accepted or rejected. **Read Ephesians 2:1-10 and write a brief description of the role the following three words play in one's pardon from sin.**

*Grace* –

*Faith* -

*Works* -

## *Expressions of Faith*

Faith, in its most basic form, simply means trust. You are saved from sin by God's grace through your trust in Jesus. Faith in Jesus is expressed in three fundamental ways.

### Belief

**Read John 3:16 and Romans 10:9-10.** Through belief you acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God and that his death and resurrection have made it possible for your sins to be forgiven.

### Repentance

**Read Acts 17:30 and 26:20.** Repentance is a turning away from sin and a turning to God. Repentance is a decision that you are no longer going to live in rebellion to God. The proof that your repentance is genuine is seen in your "deeds."

**Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-11. What is the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow?**

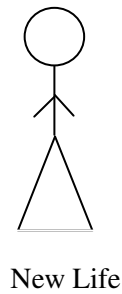
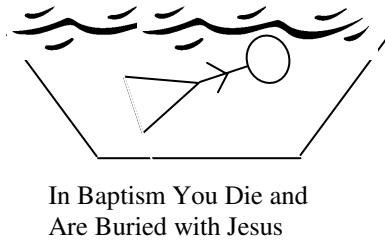
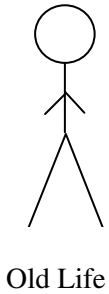
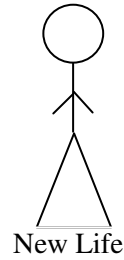
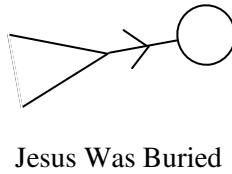
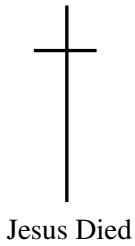
Even though there is an initial decision to repent from sin and live for God, repentance is not a one-time act. For the follower of Jesus, repentance becomes a lifestyle. The Christian constantly battles with sin and will often need to repent of mistakes in both attitudes and actions. This is how the Holy Spirit changes us and makes us more like Jesus.

### Baptism

The word "baptism" simply means immersion. The word itself does not define the substance into which one is immersed. The passages listed below that discuss baptism are talking about an immersion in water as is seen in Mark 1:4-5, John 3:23, Acts 8:36, and other passages where water is specifically stated. **Read Matthew 28:18-20.** Baptism is an extremely important part of being a disciple of Jesus. Let's look deeper into this greatly misunderstood topic.

*The Importance of Baptism*

**Read Romans 6:3-4. What happens when one is baptized?**



**What do the following scriptures teach happens during baptism?**

**Acts 2:36-38**

**Acts 22:16**

## **1 Peter 3:21**

## **Galatians 3:26-27**

Through baptism you are joined with Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection. Because of this, your sins are forgiven, and you become a child of God.

**Read Acts 8:26-39. How did the Ethiopian become a follower of Jesus?**

## Glossary of Terms

**Abraham** - The father of the Jewish nation of Israel. God promised Abraham that he would make him into a great nation (Gen. 12:1-2).

**Annas** - Formerly the high priest of the Jewish people and still highly regarded by the Jewish leaders during the time of Jesus' trial. See high priest.

**Baptism** - An immersion. Both John the Baptist and Jesus' followers immersed people in water. John baptized at Aenon because there was plenty of water there (3:23). John also said a day was coming when Jesus would baptize people in the Holy Spirit (1:33).

**Caesar** - The ruler over the entire Roman empire. The emperor at the time of Jesus' death and resurrection was Tiberius.

**Caiaphas** - The Jewish high priest at the time of Jesus' trial. See high priest.

**Chief Priests** - The official high priest, former high priests still alive, and members of their families. See high priest.

**Christ** - A title signifying that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. See Messiah.

**Circumcision** - The rite by which an eight-day-old baby boy was initiated into a covenant relationship with God as a member of the nation of Israel.

**Crucifixion** - The Roman method of capital punishment. The victim was often flogged before being nailed or tied to a cross.

**Devil** - The greatest enemy of God and man. Jesus called him a murderer and the father of lies (8:44). The devil is responsible for tempting Judas to betray Jesus (12:2). He is also called "the prince of this world" (12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

**Disciple** - A learner or follower. In John the term often means one of the twelve closest followers of Jesus.

**Elijah** - An Old Testament prophet of God who left the earth in a chariot of fire without passing through death (2 Kings 2:11). The Jewish people expected him to reappear when God restored the kingdom to Israel.

**Feast of Dedication** - A Jewish festival to celebrate the purification and renewal of the temple during the time of the Maccabean revolution (164 B.C.). Today this feast is known as Hanukkah. See **Passover**.

**Feast of Tabernacles** - One of three Jewish feasts that every man in Israel was required to attend in Jerusalem. The people lived in booths made from branches of palm trees for one week to commemorate the care and protection their ancestors had received from God for forty years in the wilderness after leaving Egypt.

**High Priest** - The mediator between God and the people of Israel. The high priest was to have descended from the line of Aaron, the first high priest selected by God during the time of Moses, and to be appointed for life. During the time of Jesus, the priesthood had become greatly corrupted. The high priest was selected and deposed at the will of the Roman emperor.

**Holy Spirit** - The Spirit of God who was sent by God to identify Jesus as his son (1:32-33). The Spirit was given by Jesus to his chosen disciples to guide them into all truth (16:13). The Spirit is also involved in the new birth of all believers in Jesus (3:5-8).

**Jacob's Well** - Built by Abraham's grandson, Jacob, 2,000 years before Jesus.

**Jewish Ruling Council** - The Sanhedrin. See **Sanhedrin**.

**Jewish Day of Preparation** - The day of preparation for the Sabbath, i.e., Friday.

**Jews** - Generally speaking, the whole nation of Israel. However, John uses the term often to mean the Jewish leaders who were hostile toward Jesus.

**John** - The author of the Gospel of John is never identified by name in the book but is commonly believed to be one of Jesus' closest disciples, John, the brother of James (Mark 1:19). John is also thought to be the unnamed disciple that appears throughout the book (1:35; 13:23; 19:26; 20:2, 7, 20). The man most often identified as John in the Gospel of John is known as John the Baptist in the other Gospels because of his insistence upon baptism.

**Law** - The commandments of God given to Moses for the Israelites. By the time of Jesus, scribal interpretations of God's law were regarded as binding and authoritative. Jesus was accused of breaking God's law when in actuality he only broke scribal interpretations. See **Moses**.

**Levites** - Descendants of Levi, the son of Jacob. All priests were to come from this tribe. The Levites that were not priests were to help the priests in their work. See priest.

**Manna** - A bread-like substance given by God to the Israelites during their forty years in the wilderness (see Exodus 16:1ff).

**Messiah** - God's anointed king. God had promised to send a messiah to establish an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14). By the time of Jesus, many Jews expected a messiah to rescue them from the Romans. Jesus came as God's messiah but was not the messiah the Jewish people expected.

**Moses** - The great lawgiver of the Jewish people. Moses was the mediator between God and Israel and was the one who communicated God's law to the people (See Exodus 19ff).

**Passover** - One of three Jewish feasts that every man in Israel was required to attend in Jerusalem. Passover commemorated God's deliverance of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. Each family in Israel was saved by the blood of a lamb which was spread on the tops and sides of the doorframes of their houses (Exodus 12:1-30). John identifies Jesus as the Passover lamb who was to be sacrificed (1:29, 36).

**Patriarchs** - The forefathers of Israel. The term is often used to mean Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

**Pharisees** - A religious sect of the Jews known for their strict observance of the Law of Moses.

**Pilate** - The Roman governor of Judea (A.D. 26-36) who ordered the execution of Jesus.

**Priests** - The mediators between God and Israel. During the time of Jesus, the priests worked at the temple in Jerusalem. See Levites.

**Prophets** - Authoritative and inspired teachers of God's will. Used in John's gospel to refer to the prophets who wrote the scriptures concerning Jesus' coming (1:45; 6:45; see also 8:52-53). Both John the Baptist and Jesus were thought to be The Prophet (1:21, 25; 6:14; 7:40). This could be the same figure as the Messiah who was to come or to some other individual who was believed to come when God established his kingdom. Jesus was the prophet who was spoken of in Deuteronomy 18:15ff.

**Sabbath** - The day of rest given by God to Israel. No work was to be done on the seventh day of the week. Jesus was involved in controversies with the religious leaders for healing individuals on the Sabbath. Healing was considered to be work by the religious authorities.

**Samaritans** - Inhabitants of the region of Samaria. A mixed race of people (Jewish and Assyrian) who worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob on Mount Gerizim rather than in Jerusalem as did the Jews. Great hatred had existed between the Samaritans and the Jewish people for hundreds of years before the time of Jesus.

**Sanhedrin** - The ruling body over Israel at the time of Jesus. There were seventy-one members including the high priest who acted as the president. The Sanhedrin was opposed to Jesus, with the exception of two of its members: Nicodemus (3:1) and Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43).

**Scriptures** - The sacred writings of Israel written by many different authors over a period of around 1,000 years by the guidance and inspiration of God.

**Synagogue** - The focal point of any Jewish community where the citizens gathered for worship and instruction in the Scriptures. Being "put out of the synagogue" (9:22) would cut one off from all dealings with the Jewish community.

**Teachers of the Law** - Teachers and interpreters of the Law. Also known as scribes. The term is used in John only in 8:3 where it refers to the scribes who were members of the Pharisees.

**Temple Courts** - A large area around the temple to which anyone, including women and Gentiles, could come.