



THE GOSPEL OF
John

About John

Our campuses are full of symbols. We see them in university emblems, logos, class rings, monuments, and more. These symbols are all designed to reveal something significant about our campuses. They are like signs that point to what our schools stand for and why they exist.

Thousands of years ago, when Jesus first entered the public sphere, no one knew who he truly was. Yet rather than making a public announcement or launching a political campaign, Jesus made himself known through a series of enacted signs. You can find them in the miracles he performed and the unusual things he said and did. All of which revealed something significant about who he really was and why he came.

Figs, wine, whips, water, mats, bread, towels, and nails. These are the seemingly random yet significant signs we'll be discussing through studying the Gospel of John. May God reveal himself in a new and deeper way to you and your friends as you uncover the real meaning of these signs.

How to Use This Guide

As you know, Bible Study is a vital part of leading a small group, but it's not the *only* part. Building friendships and following up outside of the study is crucial to leading a transformative group. This Leader's Guide is designed to help you lead both inside and outside of your group.

STUDY BREAKDOWN



THE PASSAGE

Each study begins with the portion of Scripture that you'll be exploring that week.



BEFORE THE STUDY

This section is designed to enrich your own personal understanding of each passage as you prepare to lead your friends.



DURING THE STUDY

This section provides you with everything needed to lead an engaging study. Pay attention to section headers and pacing icons.



AFTER THE STUDY

This section is designed to help you capture what God is doing in the lives of your friends and identify ways to help them grow closer to Jesus outside of the study.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS



PACING ICONS

Keep track of how much time the section should take



GO DEEPER

Go deeper into the passage with Bible Project's explainer videos



LEARN & LEAD

Lead well by learning more with InterVarsity's online training and resources

How to Lead Study

Leading an engaging study is the best way for your friends to encounter and follow Jesus! Below are the three parts to every study. For more training, visit [howto.bible](https://www.howto.bible).

SHAPE OF DISCOVERY STUDY



ENTERING THE PASSAGE

What does it say?

The goal while entering the passage is to observe what it says. Use the prompts in this section to help your group understand the background, identify the facts (e.g. who, what, when, where, etc.), and engage their senses and emotions. The key is to be curious and ask questions about everything!



DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

What does it mean?

The goal while discussing the passage is to interpret what it means. Use the prompts in this section to gather and discuss observations and questions. While observations focus on the what, interpretation questions focus on the why. The key is to discover why the author wrote this passage, what they were trying to communicate, and how the original audience would have understood it.



APPLYING THE PASSAGE

What does it mean to me, us, and our world?

The goal while applying the passage is to discover what it means for us and how we are meant to live our lives differently in light of it. Use the prompts in this section to summarize, clarify, and respond to the meaning of the passage. The key is to seek transformation, not just more information about the Bible!

Leading a Virtual Study?

While in-person Bible studies are always the best option, they may not be possible. As you follow campus guidelines for in-person gatherings, you may need to take your study virtual. If so, we have you covered!

VIRTUAL DISCOVERY KIT

Open your Virtual Discovery Kit online using the the link below. Find helpful resources to use in conjunction with this guide including visuals to screen share during the study, and more.

[BIT.LY/VIRTUAL-KIT](https://bit.ly/virtual-kit)

Discussion Guidelines

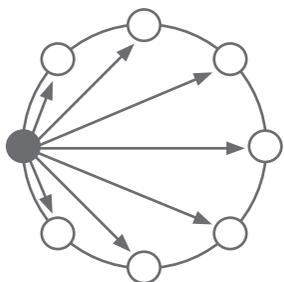
Review the Discussion Guidelines below as you begin the first few studies. Revisit them any time someone new attends. This will help everyone know what to expect.

PARTICIPATION IS CRUCIAL

In a Traditional Study, the *Leader* uses *their* questions to drive the discussion. However, in a Discovery Study, it's the *Group's* questions that drive the discussion. Discovery Studies are more engaging and interactive, but they only work if everyone participates.

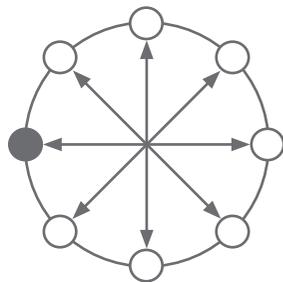
TRADITIONAL STUDY

Leader Driven



DISCOVERY STUDY

Group Driven



ASSUME YOU KNOW NOTHING

Whether the passage being studied is very familiar or completely foreign, it's best for everyone to assume they are reading it for the first time.

Sometimes knowing something can keep you from seeing something new. Focus on the passage and keep outside knowledge to a minimum.

BE REAL

Small Groups aren't just Bible Studies. They're communities, and the best communities are real and authentic. No one is perfect and everyone has questions so be real with one another.

HAVE SOME RESPECT

Everyone does not have to agree, but everyone must respect each other. The best discussions have multiple viewpoints.

Discussion Tips

Use the tips below to facilitate a great discussion. For more tips, visit InterVarsity's [howto.bible](#).

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

Context First. Then Handouts.

Always give context (i.e. Prior to Passage) first before giving handouts. Context is critical but people tend to stop listening when given handouts.

Embrace Silence

Silence can be awkward but it's crucial for studying the passage. Silent study will make for better sharing later. Give people between 3-5 minutes of silent study.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

Facilitate First. Then Share.

When discussing questions, don't share your thoughts right away. Focus on facilitating the discussion first. Then share.

Avoid Long Tangents

People lose focus with long tangents. Refocus your group by either repeating the original question or asking the next one.

Involve Everyone

Try to get everyone to share at least once during each study. Keep asking, "What do others think?"

Text the Answer

Use the passage rather than opinions to answer questions—"Where do you see that in the passage?"

Keep It Moving

Don't wait for the discussion to die before asking the next question. Move on as the discussion begins to slow.

Use Quick Recaps

Quickly summarize the story before moving on to next section of text. It helps build tension and momentum.

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

Use Group Lingo

Use the group's language rather than the guide's as much as possible. It will feel more personal and natural.

Choose One Application

Discuss only *one* Application Option. Choose the one that best fits your group's discussion.

Weekly Preparation

Preparation is crucial to leading a great study! Set aside one hour each week to prepare. If other leaders are using the same study, prepare together! For more on preparing, visit howto.bible/how-prepare.



STUDY PASSAGE 45 MIN

Before you consider what God has for your friends, consider what he has for you. Study the passage and apply it to your own life first. The best leaders lead from personal experience.



REVIEW LEADER GUIDE 10 MIN

Review the study in the Leader Guide and familiarize yourself with the questions and content. The more familiar you are with the guide the less you'll have to reference it during the study, which frees you up to focus on the discussion.



PRAY 5 MIN

Pray that the Lord would meet you and your friends through each study, and watch for how he shows up!



INVITE

Invite by sharing *why* not *what*. Rather than just sharing the place, time, and content of your study (i.e. the what), share why people might enjoy coming to your study (i.e. the why).

Consider your why. Is it to ask questions about faith? Grow in faith? Grow closer as friends? Learn how God can use us to make a difference? Clarify your "why," and then share it!

First time invitations are best done in-person. However, a text reminder the day of each study is also helpful.

Study Plan

Study	Date	Time	Location
One			
Two			
Three			
Four			
Five			
Six			
Seven			
Eight			

DATE & TIME

There is rarely a perfect time for everyone. Just pick a time that works for most people and be consistent.

LOCATION

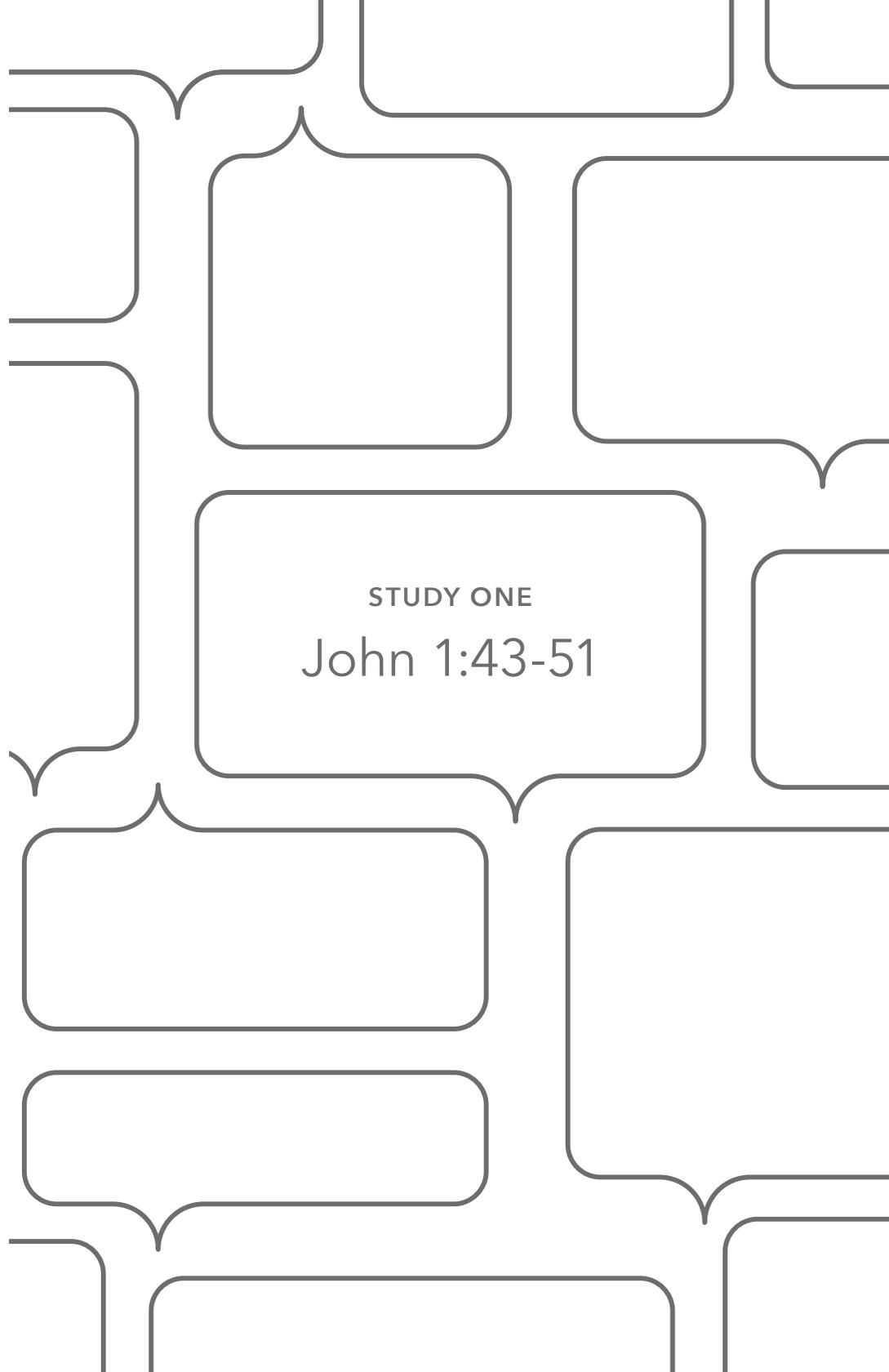
Choose a place that is quiet, relaxed, and familiar to your group.

HOSPITALITY

Make people feel at home with snacks, drinks, and a comfortable setting. Invite your friends to bring snacks as well.

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John 1:43-51

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

⁴⁶ "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. ⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." ⁴⁸ "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." ⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel." ⁵⁰ Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." ⁵¹ He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."



Before the Study

PREPARING

In order to better understand the meaning of a passage, it's critical to know how the *original audience* would have heard it. The context below has been provided for you to better understand the world in which these listeners lived. It will also be helpful in answering cultural questions that arise during the study.

Nazareth (v.46)

Nazareth was a relatively small and obscure village. People often expected important figures to hail from important places, like Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel. Nazareth was not an important place.

No Deceit (v.47)

Jesus is making a play on words here. Jacob, also called Israel whom the nation of Israel descended, deceitfully tricked his father into blessing him. A modern equivalent would be like saying, "Here is a politician who actually keeps their promises." It would have been a great compliment.

Fig Tree (v.48)

Fig trees were favorite places for people to escape the heat and read and pray in the shade. Jesus not only knows *which* specific tree Nathanael had sat under but possibly something about which Nathanael was praying, which is a demonstration of supernatural knowledge. The fig tree was also a well known symbol of the Messianic age initiated by the Son of God (Zechariah 3:8-10)



OVERVIEW OF JOHN

How do these passages fit into the larger story of Jesus?

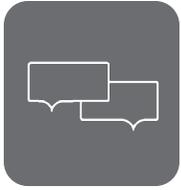
Learn more at
BibleProject.com/explore/john

King of Israel / Son of Man (v.51)

The "King of Israel" and "Son of Man" were references taken from the Prophet Daniel (Daniel 7:13-14), which described a king or divine leader who would be given authority to establish God's Kingdom on earth.

Jacob's Ladder (v.51)

Here Jesus quotes Genesis 28:10-12, which was a well known story where God revealed himself to Jacob through a dream. In the dream, Jacob sees a ladder on which angels ascended and descended between earth and heaven. Jesus references the story but adds a twist at the end. The link between heaven and earth is not a ladder but a person.



During the Study

ENTERING THE PASSAGE 5-10 MIN

DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Review the Discussion Guidelines (page six) before beginning.

PRIOR TO THIS PASSAGE

At this moment in history, the Roman Empire controls most of the known world including Israel. For hundreds of years the Jewish people have been waiting for God to send a divine leader or king to overthrow the established power and reestablish God’s Kingdom on earth. During this time, numerous leaders arose claiming to be this king. They gathered followers and planned revolts, but in the end, they all failed. Thus, people were very wary of believing anyone who claimed to be the divine king. Rather than taking these leaders at their word, the people would ask them to perform miracles or give them signs that would only be possible for someone with divine power. It is with this backdrop that our story opens with a new religious teacher as he begins to invite people to follow him.

READ ALOUD

Have three people read the passage aloud for the group. You can use the sections on the following page to assign verses to read.

CREATIVE ENTRY

Imagine you are Nathanael. Your close friend, Philip, excitedly tells you that they have found the divine king promised for hundreds of years. Philip has joined his following and now wants you to do so as well. What is your initial thought?

STUDY SILENTLY

Invite everyone to reread the passage silently. Note who, where, when, and what. Imagine yourself in the story. Note repeated words, comparisons and contrasts. Develop questions for further discussion.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE 40 MIN

SHARE OBSERVATIONS. GATHER QUESTIONS.

First, invite everyone to share their observations. Then, gather questions asking for verse references and write them in their respective sections below. Do not discuss until everyone has shared. Finally, use the checkboxes to select no more than six questions to discuss.

DISCUSS QUESTIONS

Come and See (v.43-46)

- Why does Philip find Nathanael first thing? (v.45)
- Why is Nathanael skeptical of Jesus? What’s the deal with Nazareth? (v.46)
- _____
- _____

You Know Me? (v.47-49)

- Why does Nathanael go see Jesus in spite of his skepticism? (v.47)
- Why does Nathanael quickly change his mind about who Jesus is? (v.49)
 - Imagine seeing a shooting star by yourself one night and wishing you could meet the next U.S. President. If the next presidential candidate made an unexpected campaign stop in your hometown the following day and told you, “Wish granted,” what would you think?
- _____
- _____

Greater Things (v.50-51)

- What does Jesus mean by his last comment? What’s the significance? (v.51)
- _____
- _____

APPLYING THE PASSAGE



10-15
MIN

SUMMARY

When Philip finds Nathanael claiming he has found the divine king promised for hundreds of years, Nathanael is immediately skeptical about Jesus and his obscure, small town roots. Yet, in spite of his skepticism, he accepts Philip's invitation to come and see. However, it's not long after Nathanael meets Jesus that he has a radical change of heart. Why the extreme change? Fig trees were not only common places for biblical reading and prayer but also well known symbols of the new age in which God would establish his kingdom on earth through the long awaited king. It's not a stretch to imagine that Nathanael may have been reading stories and praying to God about this king. So when Jesus says, "I saw you under the fig tree," it's as if Nathanael hears him say, "Prayer answered!" For Nathanael, Jesus goes from being just another regular guy claiming to be king to the real king sent from God.

BIG IDEA

The best way to learn more about Jesus is to come and see for yourself.

APPLICATION OPTIONS

Discuss *one* Application Option from the next page. Then finish by sharing The Bigger Story and Creative Response.

THE BIGGER STORY

Whether you grew up in the church, never stepped foot in one, or come from another religion altogether, it is easy to be skeptical about something when we have an incomplete understanding or preconceived notions about who Jesus is. But if we're simply willing to show up and see for ourselves, Jesus promises to reveal even greater things. Jesus ends this story with a reference to another story known as Jacob's Ladder in which a guy named Jacob sees God creating a link between heaven and earth through a divine ladder. Jesus co-opts this story with a significant twist at the end. The link isn't a *ladder*. It's a *person*. No longer would people have to find their way to God because God found his way to us... through a regular, backwoods town guy named Jesus.

CREATIVE RESPONSE

Depending on the comfort of your group, you can simply pray or creatively respond through journaling, music, or another form of prayer.

APPLICATION OPTIONS

Commit to Coming

This Bible Study is an opportunity for us to "come and see" Jesus for ourselves. However, while it's exciting to be back for a new (school) year, inevitably we'll all get bogged down with exams, relationships, and other commitments as time goes on, and there's a good chance Bible Study will take a back seat. **How interested are you in coming out to this study each week? What do you personally need in order to commit to coming each week to see Jesus for yourself?**

Don't Knock Him Before You Know Him

Philip basically tells Nathanael, "Don't knock Jesus before you know him." **How well do you feel like you understand Jesus (that is who he is and why he matters)? How interested and willing are you to come out to this study each week to get to know Jesus for yourself? How can I help in the process?**

You Should Come

The first thing we see Philip do in this story is invite his good friend to come see Jesus for himself. Even when Nathanael shoots down the initial invitation, Philip politely suggests that his friend just come. **How does Philip model what it looks like to invite our friends to this study? What would keep you from inviting other friends to this study? Would you be willing to invite one other person next week?**

