



LEADER GUIDE

INTRO TO JOHN: THE BOOK OF SIGNS

BIG IDEA: All signs point to Jesus as being God's Son, our Messiah who will fulfill God's plan.

DATE: Sunday, January 4, 2026

SCRIPTURE: John 20:30-31; 21:24-25

OPENING QUESTION

What do you think of when you hear the word "signs"?

Maybe it's the 2002 movie "Signs" with Mel Gibson about aliens visiting Earth. Or it could be the classic 1970 rock song "Signs" by Five Man Electrical Band. Most likely you think of traffic signs—stop signs, yield signs, street signs, etc. Signs are meant to communicate something to us. To tell something or show us the way.

What are some signs that God gave to people in the Bible? The rainbow showed His promise to Noah. The burning bush showed His call to Moses. The plagues showed His power to Pharaoh. The Ark of the Covenant showed His presence to the Israelites. Even in the New Testament, Jesus showed His scars to Thomas as signs of who He was. He gave Peter a vision to show him that the Gospel was for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. And the Book of Revelation is full of signs and symbols of the End Times.

Have you ever asked God for a sign? What happened?

From now until Easter our LifeGroup will be studying the Gospel of John. We're going to walk with Jesus from His birth in Bethlehem to His resurrection in Jerusalem. We'll see how He called His disciples, taught His followers, and most of all, gave us signs to follow. Each of His miracles and teachings point us to something important about who Jesus is and why He came.

SETTING THE STAGE

John is the fourth Gospel telling the story of Jesus's time on Earth. It was probably the last one written. Most scholars believe it was written around 80 A.D. in the city of Ephesus. John was one of Jesus's first Disciples. Along with his brother James, they were given the nickname "The Sons of Thunder" by Jesus. The brothers were part of Jesus's inner circle along with Peter. Throughout the Gospel of John, he refers to himself as "the disciple who Jesus loved." He had a very close, personal relationship with Jesus during his time on Earth. John was the only one of the 12 Disciples to die a natural death of old age. He wrote the books of John, 1, 2, 3 John, and Revelation. John focuses on the signposts of the Savior – showing that Jesus is indeed the Son of God and the Messiah who has come to fulfill God's plan.

SCRIPTURE READING

JOHN 20:30-31 (NIV)

"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

JOHN 21:24-25 (NIV)

"This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."

DISCUSSION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIGNS

READ: John 20:30-31 and 21:24-25

It's interesting to think about what other signs and wonders Jesus did during his time on Earth. John says Jesus performed many other miracles and signs when he was with his disciples. We can speculate about what they were, but ultimately, we won't know until we get to heaven. However, the Bible does make it clear that there is a purpose to the signs that are recorded.

- According to John, what is the purpose of the signs that he wrote down about Jesus? (John 20:31)
- How do signs help us believe?
- What's the difference between believing in the signs and believing in Jesus?

We can believe that Jesus performed miracles, that he fulfilled prophecies, or that he taught profound truths. But this is not the same as believing in Jesus. Many people followed Jesus because of the signs and wonders he performed.

"And a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick." John 6:2

But they missed the point of the signs. They were only there for the performance or the supernatural. Like spiritual thrill-seekers they were only interested if something amazing happened. But they missed the point of the miracles of Jesus because they missed Jesus. As we study these different signs throughout the Gospel of John, look at the different reactions people had. All were amazed, but only some followed Jesus for who He was instead of what He could do. We can have the same problem today when we follow Jesus for what He will do for us instead of what He has already done for us.

SEEKING A SIGN OR SEEKING A SAVIOR

Divide your class into 2 groups to have a discussion of whether or not we should seek signs from God. Give each group about 5-10 minutes to discuss and then have them share their thoughts with the whole class.

Group #1—Asking for a sign shows a lack of faith.

Read Matthew 12:38-41

- Why did the people seek a sign from Jesus?
- Why did Jesus call them evil and adulterous?
- How is asking for a sign from a God show a lack of faith?

The Pharisees wanted a sign from Jesus, but he would give them none except a prophecy about his death that he called 'The Sign of Jonah': just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for 3 days, so would Jesus be in the grave 3 days and come back after that. They did not understand what he was talking about at the time. Their motivation was to test Jesus, to find some fault in him, to set him a task that he couldn't do (see Luke 11:53-54). Their demand for a sign was wicked because it was based in a lack of belief that Jesus could perform a sign.

Group #2—Asking for a sign is evidence of faith.

Read Judges 6:11-18

- Why did Gideon ask for a sign?
- Did God seem angry about Gideon's request?
- How can asking God for a sign be evidence of faith?

Gideon saw the Angel of the Lord (which some scholars believe was a pre-incarnate Jesus himself) and still asked for a sign. God did not rebuke him or judge him or abandon him, but instead gave him the sign. Gideon later asks for more signs and God provides them. Even the disciple Thomas needed proof of Jesus resurrection and Jesus showed him without judging him (see John 20:24-29). Both Gideon and Thomas already believed in God but still asked for a sign.

Let each group share a little, then ask "What is the difference in the Pharisees asking for a sign and being called out by Jesus and Gideon asking for a sign and God blessing him?" The difference is in the motivation of the heart. The Pharisees wanted to test Jesus. They did not believe in him. He knew that even if He gave them a sign, they would still harden their hearts. Their search for a sign was a ruse or excuse thus Jesus called them wicked. But sometimes seeking a sign shows faith. Gideon sought God's confirmation on his assignment. Jesus (and later the Disciples and others) gave people signs and wonders to prove the message of the Gospel.

Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus gives signs—both to those who ask and those who don't. He uses these signs to reveal that He is God's Son and the long-awaited Messiah. At the same time, He condemns those who are only seeking after signs instead of seeking Him.

RESPONSE

Ask God to develop a faith in you that seeks Him, not just for the signs or what He can do for you, but for who He is and what He has already done. Ask Him to open your eyes to see the signs He has already placed around you to lead and guide you.

100 DAY BIBLE CHALLENGE: READING PLAN

Encourage your group to participate in the weekly reading plan. You can visit www.chetscreek.com/Bible for all the details.

WEEK 1: 1/04-Genesis 1; 1/05-Genesis 2; 1/06-Genesis 3; 1/07-Genesis 4; 1/08-Genesis 5; 1/09-Romans 5; 1/10-Romans 6

COMMENTARY

The Gospel of John

John, as one of the key disciples of Jesus, wrote this book probably around 80 A.D. This was after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. John died around 100 A.D. after finishing the Book of Revelation while in exile on the island of Patmos. He was the only one of the original 12 Disciples to die a natural death—all the others were martyred for their faith. John went on to play a key role in the church in Ephesus and was probably there when he wrote the Gospel of John. While the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain many descriptions of the same events, almost 90% of what is in the Gospel of John is unique and does not appear in the other Gospels. John focuses on themes of Life, Light, and Love. Because he explained many of the Jewish customs in his Gospel, he was probably writing to Gentiles. As he states in the closing verses of the book that we looked at today, his purpose was both to initiate and inspire faith in Jesus Christ.

Signs in the Gospel of John

A unique feature in John's Gospel is his designation of 7 miraculous acts Jesus performed that he called "signs". The Greek word translated "sign" is "semeion". It occurs 75 times in the New Testament and 17 times in the Gospel of John alone. The most common meaning of the word is "a sign, mark, indication, or token." In a more specific sense in John's Gospel, it refers to miraculous acts that show forth divine authority and power. John uses the miracles of Jesus as signs that reveal significant truths about Him. These truths often have less to do with the actual miracle and more to do with the meaning behind them.

John 20:30-31

The emphasis throughout the Gospel of John is on believing. There are nearly 100 references in this book to believing in or on Jesus. John was inspired to write this record of Jesus's life and miracles, so we come face to face with Jesus Christ, how He lived, what He said, and what He did. All the evidence points to the conclusion that He is indeed God come in the flesh, the Savior of the World.

The signs that John selected and described in this book are proof of the deity of Christ. They are important. But sinners are not saved by believing in miracles; they are saved by believing on Jesus Christ. Great crowds followed Jesus because of His miracles (John 6:2); but in the end most of them left Him for good (John 6:66). Even the religious leaders who plotted His death believed He did miracles, but this "faith" did not save them (John 11:47).

Faith in His miracles should lead to faith in His word, and to personal faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Jesus Himself pointed out that faith in His works was but the first step toward faith in the Word of God (John 5:36-40). The sinner must "hear" the Word if he is to be saved.

John was not content to simply explain a subject. He was an evangelist who wanted to achieve a goal. He wanted his readers to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved! He was not writing a biography to entertain or a history to enlighten, but a Gospel to change people's lives.

John 21:24-25

These closing verses of John's Gospel become very personal. He switches from using the pronoun "we" in verse 24 to "I" in verse 25. It was common in ancient Jewish and Greek letters to close with a statement from the author personally attesting to what he has written. This is what John is doing here. Since John was the longest-lived Apostle, many who read his Gospel would have known him or known of him. They knew him as sincere and trustworthy, a faithful eyewitness of the life of Jesus. As John came to the close of his book, he affirmed the credibility of his witness (the word "witness" is used 47 times in this Gospel). John witnessed these events himself and wrote them for us as he was led and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

There was no need for John to describe every miracle that Jesus performed. The life and ministry of Jesus Christ were simply too rich and full for any writer, even an inspired one, to give a complete record. But a complete record is not necessary. All of the basic facts are here to read and consider. There is sufficient truth for any sinner to believe and be saved.

Excerpted from The Storyteller series by LifeWay "John: Signs of the Messiah" and the article "Signs in John's Gospel" by Robert E. Jones from Lifeway's Bible Studies for Life Series on John. Commentary from "The Bible Exposition Commentary" by Warren W. Wiersbe.