

An Overview of the Gospel of John

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Preacher: Mike Salvati

[0:00] Well, I just didn't get enough diagramming out of me last week. So we're going to do some more diagramming.! Where are you going spiritually in 2026?

And how are you going to get there? In the summer of 2023, me, my wife Jenny, our youngest man, we packed into our Honda CRV.

And we made an epic road trip to the West Coast and back. It was over 7,000 miles, and it was just unforgettable.

But prior to the trip, we mapped out everything. We identified our driving route. We kind of pinpointed our destinations.

We made our reservations. We set out our itinerary. We wanted to see Crested Butte, Zion National Park. We wanted to be in L.A., but just for a little bit.

[1:24] We wanted to go to San Diego, Yosemite. Give me a shout out. Anybody been there? This summer, all of us road trip, church bus.

We even went to Waldreg. You know what mapping out our trip did for us? It motivated us.

We could see where we were going. It caused our hearts to rise. It made us long for what we would see. And we were not disappointed.

This past December, December 2025, we started making our way through the Gospel of John. The epic journey has already begun. We are making our way through the Gospel of John.

We will be in the Gospel of John for several months. And we saw that in 1 John 1 through 18, which is the introduction, the prologue. Remember this verse in verse 14?

[2:27] The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory. Glory as of the only one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth, full of steadfast love and faithfulness.

So we've already started this spiritual journey in the Gospel of John. Now, if you're not familiar with the New Testament, the Gospel of John is like a biography about Jesus, but it's written from an eyewitness account.

John was with Jesus. And so John is going to give us his eyewitness account of what has actually happened in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And so this morning, I've got two goals to this sermon. Goal number one, I want to map out the Gospel of John for you.

I want you to see where we're going. And I'm going to use a diagram to do it. And I think it's going to be a lot of fun. If you don't think so, that's okay. Don't tell me. But I want you to get your bearings.

[3:27] And what we're going to see is a storyline, or what's called a story arc. And then I'm going to show you the sevens in the Gospel of John. You've got to wait on that. The second thing, the goal is, is to motivate you.

I want to motivate you. I want you to see what's coming, and I want your hearts to rise to beholding Christ's glory, to believing in Christ's name, and to be living by his grace.

And so if you've got a non-religious background, you didn't grow up in the church, this whole Christianity thing is new to you, what I want you to start to see is what Christianity is all about. It's all about a person.

And if you have a church background, but for whatever reason, you've been out of church for a while, but now you're back, welcome back. But I want to help you see that coming back to church isn't about the church.

It's about the Gospel of John, the spotlight, and his name is Jesus. If you're middle school or high school, and you've grown up in a Christian home, your parents are Christians.

[4:30] In fact, you would say you have a drug problem. Your parents drug you to church. That's your drug problem. Well, there's going to come a point where you're going to need to decide for yourself whether this Christianity thing is true.

And I want to help you see what's at the center of Christianity so that you can decide for yourself whether you're going to follow Jesus all the days or not. If you're a new Christian, maybe you've been swimming against the stream, the current, you're kind of tired, I want you to see that Jesus is worth it.

If you're a seasoned, let's say seasoned Christian, you've been walking for Jesus with years, maybe decades, but maybe you've started to plateau a little bit.

Maybe things have just gotten a little stale. I want your gaze to fall upon the glory of Christ and for you to experience a revitalizing in your inner being and that you walk into 2026 enlivened.

So here's what we're going to do. We're going to map out the gospel of John in order to motivate you for what lies ahead. Are you guys ready? Where are you going? In 2026, here's where we're going.

[5:42] We're going after Jesus. Do I have an amen? Amen. All right. Let's start with the map. You guys ready for some dynamic magic marking?

Let's do it. Now, I made this mistake last week. Turn your bulletin sideways, please. Okay? And you're going to need to leave some room on the bottom.

The bottom third, I want you to leave room for three spots. I want you to have the word behold. Believe.

By the way, if you're sitting in the back, I am so sorry. You probably can't read this, but bear with me. Okay, so believe, oops, and live.

Okay. So let's talk about the map of the gospel of John. Any good story has what's called a story arc.

[6:38] So anybody seen Raiders of the Lost Ark? Yes. Anybody seen The Outsiders? Old school. Yes. Anybody seen 1977 Star Wars? Yes.

Yes. Okay, that's all I got. That's like my childhood movies, all right? But every good story has what's called a story arc. The book of Judges has a story arc.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the other gospels have story arcs. And here's what I want you to draw. I want you to draw a story arc. And it's like a wave. It starts low and then builds up and then comes down again like that.

Can you draw that on your bulletin, please? And then here's how it works out. Here's how the story arc progresses. It starts with an introduction. You learn about who the character are and what the situation is.

And then you have this thing called rising tension. There's this stuff that unfolds. And you're like, what's going to happen? And then it reaches the top of the wave.

[7:40] That's called the climax. And that's where kind of like the big stuff happens. And then you have this thing called falling tension. And then you have the conclusion.

So at a minimum, you can leave this sanctuary today saying, I learned what a story arc is. But I'm not here to tell you about story arcs. I'm here to tell you about what the story arc of the gospel of John is.

So let me lay out kind of the chapters. The intro, the prologue, is chapter 1. And then the rising tension is chapters 2 through 10, 11 and 12, and then 13 through 17.

So we have rising tension taking place. And then when you get up to the climax, it's 18 and then 19 is the climax. The climax, specifically three words in chapter 19, is the climax of the gospel of John. And then chapter 20 is the falling tension. And then 21 is the epilogue. It is the conclusion, the new normal. So that's the story arc of the gospel of John.

[8:50] I'm mapping it out for you. But when you say this, you're kind of like, huh, it's just an arc. So let me backfill a little bit, okay? Let me give you some of the rising tension.

So what's the tension of the gospel of John? Well, it's not complicated. It has got everything to do with this question. Who is Jesus?

And all of the tension of the gospel of John is kind of working around this. And so let me just give you some kind of like, some flavor. Chapter 2 in the gospel of John.

Do you know what happens? Jesus cleanses the temple. Makes a whip. Drives people out. That is not how you want to make friends and influence people.

Do you know what I'm saying? So it starts with tension. And then in chapter 3, Jesus meets at night with this teacher called Nicodemus. He's the teacher of Israel.

[9:47] And so Jesus is trying to explain to him what it means to be born of the Spirit. And he doesn't know what he's talking about. And Jesus says this to him in verse 10 of chapter 3. Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?

He's teaching the teacher of Israel. What's going on? Who is this guy that does that? And then in chapter 4, chapter 4 is an incredible account of Jesus in the Samaritan woman in this area called Samaria.

It was a huge no-no for a Jew to be in, let alone talking to a woman. Who is this guy? And you know what he tells her? They're at the well of Jacob.

And he's like, hey, you know what? If you drink the water that I give you, you will never thirst again. She's like, I want that water.

And then he goes on and tells her she's had five different husbands. And the guy that she's with isn't her husband. And she's like, oh my, who are you? You know everything about me.

[10:48] And he stays in Samaria for like a couple more days. This is remarkable. Who is this guy? So you see the building of tension here? It's all around who Jesus is. Chapter 5, he heals this guy, this paralyzed guy on the Sabbath day.

And people freak out about it. And then in chapter 5, verse 39, he said, you've got to turn with me. You've got to turn with me. I can't believe this is in my Bible.

Chapter 5, verse 39. We read this. This is Jesus speaking. Speaking to the Jews, the Jewish establishment who were having a hard time with what he was doing.

He says to them, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is they that bear witness about me. Who is this guy? That the whole Old Testament is pointing to him somehow?

And then if you look at verse 44, same chapter, how can you believe when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do you not think that I will accuse you to the Father?

[11:59] There is one who accuses you, Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believe Moses, you would believe me. For he wrote of me. This is Jesus.

Who is this guy? So you have this kind of growing sense of tension of Jesus kind of confronting the Jewish establishment over who is he?

Who is this person? But we already know from John chapter 1 that he is the word incarnate. He's God in the flesh. He has come to make known the invisible God in fullness.

Grace upon grace. Grace upon grace. In chapter 6, he feeds 5,000. Claims to be the bread of life. And then he said something really hard in verses 52 through 58. He's like, if you want eternal life, you've got to eat my flesh and drink my blood. And the people there in verse 60 are like, this is a hard saying.

[13:01] We don't know what to make of it. Verse 66, a bunch of those people who are following him leave him. He knows what it's like to be abandoned. Who is this guy?

Chapter 8, he says, I'm the light of the world. And then he turns to the Jews and says, oh, by the way, your father is the devil. Again, not making friends.

Chapter 9, he heals a man born blind. On the Sabbath day. The Jews of the time take issue with it.

Chapter 10, he talks about how that he came to give life and to give it abundantly. That he's the good shepherd who lays his life down for his sheep.

And then in verse 31, the Jews pick up stones to stone him because they see him as claiming to be God. Who is this guy? And so chapters 2 through 10 is you have this rising conflict between Jesus and the Jewish establishment.

[14:02] And it's all over who Jesus is and what he's claiming. And you've got to be asking the question, is it true what he's saying about himself? In chapters 11 and 12, there's this turning point with the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus waits a couple days until he's dead. Why would he do that? He raises him from the dead. People are shocked. Chapter 12, it begins with Mary anointing Jesus with this very expensive perfume.

And then Judas is like, why are you doing that? It's cost too much money. To which Jesus said, says, she's preparing me for my burial. And that should like, what?

Burial? Where's this coming from? And then later in chapter 12, verse 12, Jesus enters Jerusalem. And the whole story slows down. Of Jesus one week in Jerusalem. And the reason why it slows down is it's drawing emphasis to what Jesus has to say and what he's about to do.

[15:19] In chapter 12 as well, they seek to put Lazarus to death because the Jewish establishment is trying to get rid of the evidence of what Jesus has done.

And then when we get to verses 13 through 17, this is known as the farewell discourse. Where Jesus is bidding his disciples farewell. I'm leaving.

It adds more tension to the story. Where is he going? And in chapter 13, he washes the disciples' feet. So when he comes into Jerusalem, people, this large crowd is praising him from Psalm 118. They're saying, Hosanna the highest, you're the king of Israel. And then in chapter 13, the king of Israel, God incarnate, stripped himself to just his undergarments and he's washing his disciples' feet.

Who is this guy? Why? Chapters 14 through 16, Jesus is teaching his disciples about the Holy Spirit, about that he is divine, that he's overcome the world.

[16:21] It is spectacular. Chapter 17 is the high priestly prayer where he prays for his disciples and he even prays for you and me. He prays for us. And then we get into the climax.

Chapter 18, Jesus is betrayed. He's arrested. He's questioned by Caiaphas, the high priest, and by Pilate.

Building tension. And at the same time, Peter is denying him. It's quite a contrast. And then in chapter 19, it is the climax of the book where we have the king of Israel.

It is nailed above his head on the cross. It's crucified. And it climaxes in chapter 19, verse 30, in three words.

It is finished. God incarnate. God incarnate. The king of Israel.

[17:25] The Christ has given himself willingly on the cross for the sins of those people who've rebelled against him. Chapter 20, we have falling tension.

Jesus is raised from the dead. He starts to appear to his disciples in chapter 21. He reinstates Peter. And it's good news to any Christian in the room who has failed Jesus.

This is the map. Amen. But I want to point to one more thing before we move on. We've looked at the map.

Let me show you the sevens. We move from story arc to the sevens. When I talk about the sevens, there are three sets of sevens in the Gospel of John.

In the Bible, seven, see that? Seven carries this sense of completion. This sense of fullness.

Remember, at the beginning of Genesis 2, God is created on the first six days.

[18:36] And on the seventh, he rested because he's done everything he needed to do. His work is completed. It's been fulfilled. He has filled the world, the earth, with fullness.

Of his fullness, we have all received and grace upon grace. And so all these sevens, these sets of sevens are pointing to how Jesus is the fullness of God in human form, our salvation.

You ready for these three sevens? Here we go. The first seven are seven signs. I'm not going to give you them all. But in chapter 2, verse 11, the first sign, the wedding at Cana, we are told what

these signs are.

They're manifestations of the glory of Jesus Christ. They manifest his glory. They show us his wonders. And there are seven of them.

The sixth is the raising of Lazarus. And the seventh is the resurrection of Jesus himself. And so what you have here throughout this is you have this woven seven signs going throughout the Gospel of John.

[19:44] And then there's another set of sevens. The seven I am's. I am dot, dot, dot. Many of you are familiar with them.

Let me just hammer them out. Chapter 6, I'm the bread of life. Chapter 8, I'm the light of the world. Chapter 10, I'm the door. Chapter 10, 11, and 14, I'm the good shepherd. Chapter 11, I'm the resurrection and the life.

Chapter 14, I'm the way, the truth, and the life. Chapter 7, or the 7th. Chapter 15, I am the true vine. And all of these I am statements are dealing with life.

We know that he is the life. And that life is the light of the world. We're talking about salvation. And so we have another weaving of sevens all throughout the Gospel of John.

But the final set of sevens is a little bit more subtle, but incredibly powerful. They are the seven I am periods.

[20:49] And these sevens go like this, where Jesus is actually claiming to be the great I am of the Old Testament.

As in, like Exodus 3, God in the burning bush appears to Moses. They have a dialogue. Moses says, who do I tell Israel that's sending me? And God says, I am sending you.

And it's in the Greek, it's ego eimi. The first I am is in chapter 4, the woman at the well. Jesus says, I am he. The second is Jesus walking on the water at night.

His disciples are gunning it, trying to make their way across the Sea of Galilee. And Jesus is just walking on the water. They're afraid. And so he says, it is I, ego eimi.

Do not be afraid. The third, fourth, and fifth occurrences happen in chapter 28. It culminates in verse 58, where Jesus is talking to these Jews.

[21:51] And he says, before Abraham was, ego eimi, I am. The sixth occurrence is in chapter 13 at the Last Supper. Jesus, he says, Jesus is going to betray him.

And all of it will happen to show that it's ego eimi. And then the last occurrence is in chapter 18 at his arrest.

It's in the garden. And then this group comes out armed, seeking to arrest him. And Jesus says, who are you looking for? They say, Jesus of Nazareth. And he responds, ego eimi.

And then knocks everybody down. So what we have here in these ego eimi's is just another weaving of a claim of who Jesus is.

And they're all dealing with this tension. Who is Jesus? And so you have the map as well as these sevens. And it's all to demonstrate the glory of who Jesus Christ is.

[22:59] He's the fulfillment of God's plan for the fullness of time. He is God's plan because he is God himself.

Who is this? So over the weeks and months, we're gathering together to unpack the gospel of John. I want you to be asking this question.

Is it true? Is this true? Is this true about Jesus? Where are you going in 2026?

Where are you going spiritually? How are you going to get there? We're going after the glory of Jesus Christ. We're going to behold him. We're going to receive his fullness.

Grace upon grace. And for the remainder of my time, we're going to move now from the map to the motivation. And I want you to turn in your Bibles to John chapter 20, verses 30 and 31.

[24:03] John, it's on page 1078 of your pew Bible. The gospel of John is somewhat unique because the gospel of John has a purpose statement in it.

It's at the end of the gospel. And so if you would turn there with me, let me just read it to you. Jesus has been raised from the dead.

And we read in verse 30. Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name.

The gospel of John is seeking to motivate you in three ways. The first is for you to behold the glory of Jesus. Behold his glory.

That is now Jesus did many other signs. Remember, a sign was a manifestation of the glory of Jesus Christ. And so the first thing that we're going to be motivated to is to behold his glory.

[25:14] The glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. And what it will motivate is awe. Is worship. You'll stand amazed at the Nazarene, Jesus.

There are a lot of signs here. There's seven. The wedding of Cana. The healing of the official son. Feeding of the 5,000. Raising of Lazarus.

Jesus' own resurrection. But it's not just the signs in the gospel of John that reveal his glory. We're going to watch Jesus interact with people.

And he puts on a clinic. Of what it looks like for God to interact with human beings with various backgrounds. When Jesus interacts with the woman at the well in chapter 4.

It's the God of steadfast love and faithfulness. Meeting and talking with this woman with a really questionable past.

[26:11] It's amazing. You're going to behold his glory. When he meets with Nicodemus. With his disciples. In chapter 11. When he interacts with Mary and Martha.

When he is before Caiaphas. And before Pilate. When he restores Peter. And when he speaks to John. And this is all incredible. We're going to see his glory on display.

In his relationships with people. And then his teaching. His glory is on display. He says things that are amazing.

In fact, one of the things he'll say is in chapter 13. It's a new commandment I give to you. That you love one another. Just as I have loved you. You are to love each other. He says some things that reveal his glory.

But the greatest moment of glory. In the gospel of John. Takes place in chapter 19. At his crucifixion and death. It's those three words.

[27:14] It is finished. When God incarnate is hanging on a cross. And saying my work is done. Our salvation has been accomplished.

So if you've got a non-religious background. I want to help you see the glory of Jesus Christ. That's what the Christian faith is all about. If you've recently come back to church.

It's not about church. It's about the head of our church. Jesus. If you have Christian parents. You need to make a decision on this one.

This glorious son of God yourself. And the question that you need to be asking is. Is it true? Because if it's not true. It's a hoax.

And you flush it. But if it is true. This is your salvation. This is your life. So the first motive is to behold his glory.

[28:13] So all throughout the next several months. We're going to be praying things like this. Show me your glory. We're going to open up Gospel of John. And say show me your glory. The second way.

That the Gospel of John motivates. Is in chapter 20 verse 31. All these signs. But these are written. So that you may believe.

That Jesus is the Christ. The Son of God. That you may believe. Believe in his name. This book. This Gospel.

Is intended to persuade you. To convince you. Of John's eyewitness. Historical accounts. About Jesus Christ. That who he claimed to be.

Is true. That he's God in the flesh. And he died on the cross. For our salvation. So when you behold his glory. The appropriate response. Is to believe in his name.

[29:12] And when you believe in his name. You're believing in everything about him. You're believing everything to be true. Next week. I'm going to preach. The rest of chapter one. And there are these multiple titles.

Of Jesus. In the rest of chapter one. And it's. We're to believe all of it. And this belief is. Not some kind of passive acknowledgement. But an active trust.

Imagine. You are seated at a poker table. With three other players. The thing is. Each player. Yourself included.

Only has one card. The first player. He looks at his card. Takes all of his chips. And pushes them in.

All in. Next player. She looks at her card. She takes all of her chips. She puts it in. The next player. She looks at her card.

[30:10] And then shoves all her chips in. Massive pile of chips. Right? Everybody is giving all that they got. For this card. That they hold.

And then you. You look at your card. And you're like. Yes and amen. And you say all in. And then the time in the game calls. Where everybody's got to show their cards.

They're showing what they have banked. Their lives upon. They're saying. This is what I believe. To be the source of life.

This is what I believe. Is what everybody needs. In order to be happy. The first player. Shows his hand. It says comfort. All in for comfort.

The second player. Looks at her hand. Shows it. It's success. Yes. I've given my life. To success. To be impressive. In the eyes of others. This is where I think life is.

[31:09] The third player. She shows her card. It's science. We just got to figure things out. Or in the Martian. We just got to science it out. We've got all the answers.

I'm going to bank my life on it. And then you show your card. And it says Jesus. I've banked my life on him. That's active faith.

All your chips in on him. The card of greatest value on the day of judgment. Is not comfort.

It's not success. It's not even science. It's the person of Jesus Christ. In him alone is the life that we're all pining for.

So if you've got a non-religious background. The gospel of John is going to call you to go all in on Jesus Christ.

[32:09] Because of who he is. If you're coming back from being away from the church for a little bit. The gospel of John is calling you all in on the person of Jesus Christ. Because he's glorious.

If you're middle school and high school. All in. New Christian. All in. Seasoned Christian. All in. Everyone in the room.

The gospel of John calls us. In light of his glory. To go all in for Jesus. Behold his glory. Believe in his name.

All in on Jesus. And then finally. We live by his grace. We read it here in verse 31. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.

The son of God. And that by believing. You may have life. In his name. This. This motivates life.

[33:07] This motivates your dependence on him. By believing you may have life. In Christ. This is the abundant life of 1010.

This is the eternal life of 316. This is the born again life of 316. This is the. The right to become children of God. Life of 112. A new creation.

The old is gone. The new has come. This is the life that comes from being in right relationship with God. 17.3. This is the life that comes from abiding in the vine. Chapter 15.

This is transformational life. When you behold the glory of Christ. And believe in his name. You will live by his grace. You will receive his fullness.

Grace upon grace. Superseding. Super abounding grace. You'll live. Maybe you're feeling spiritually dull. Maybe you're even thinking you're spiritually dead.

[34:04] When you behold his glory. And you believe in his name. You will live by his grace. It is a different kind of living. It is dependent living.

On the risen Christ. The thing you need to know about this. Eternal life.

Is that it doesn't start when you die. The eternal life that John is talking about. begins at the moment of your conversion. When you're born again.

And so if you've got a non-religious background. You need the life that's in Christ. You need to be born again. If you've been away from the church. You don't need to be at church again.

You need life in Christ. If you're a middle school or high school student. And your parents are Christians. They cannot impart the spiritual life.

[34:59] That only Jesus can. If you are a new Christian. You're swimming against the current. Don't give up. Life.

Your life is in Christ. And if you're a seasoned Christian. It was plateaued a little bit. Set your heart on Jesus. And live.

The way to life. Is beholding his glory. And believing in his name. All in on Jesus. It's been 35 minutes.

I hope something changed in you. Over the last 35 minutes. If someone were to ask you. 35 minutes ago. What were you looking forward to in 2026?

Maybe you're looking to a vacation. A class. A competition. Maybe it's some kind of. Kind of improvement to your house.

[36:01] Maybe it's job progression. Hopefully. Maybe it's been.

Hopefully. In the last 35 minutes. Something glorious. Has just entered your 2026.

Motivational mix. It's been mapped out for you. And maybe you've been motivated. To behold the glory of Christ.

To believe in Christ's name. And to live by the grace. That Christ gives. In super abundant fashion. In. Here we go.

Where are we going in 2026? We're going after the glory of Jesus Christ. I'm going to give you about 30 seconds to pray. And I want you.

To say to God. Ask him something very simple. Show me your glory. And then I'll close this. And then we'll sing. God in heaven.

[37:19] We are so thankful for the gospel of John. In advance. We're so grateful that. That you want. To reveal your glory to us.

In the person of Jesus Christ. And so father. We would ask that you would. Pour out your spirit. In a full. Way. In a frequent.

Way. Over the next several months. as we gather Sunday after Sunday. Sunday, and we behold the glory of the Son. Would you show us your glory, Lord Jesus, so that we can live for you, live by your grace and for your glory. It's in your name we pray. Amen.