



7 Bible studies on...

'John's 7 signs'



'getting a handle on John's 7 signs'

John tells us why he put together his Gospel account of Jesus' life...

"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples (of whom John was one), which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31)

So, one way to get the gist of all of this is to look at the 7 key signs John seems to have focused on. There is so much richness and truth revealed when we do. They lead us or point us to faith in Jesus and how that can grow.

All the Gospels have rich stories, which is no surprise given the massive life changing things Jesus did. But John brings some extra material to the table that the other 3 Gospels don't cover. As John himself concluded...

"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." (John 21:25)

But let's dive in and sample how these signs add to the rich witness of the other 3 Gospels...

Hints for these studies

With each question, sometimes there's a follow up question or two included at the same number. This is to just help draw it out a bit more. You may get it with the first one so don't panic if you end up saying the same thing in thinking about the follow up question—just move on.

Also, don't panic if you can't quite see what a question might be driving at. These questions obviously are not the Bible. Feel free to move onto the next one. The questions are just an attempt to help us get into a particular part of the Bible or issue. Let the Bible drive things at the end of the day (the questions are of course still hoped to be helpful in leading in to what God is saying (the first 1/2 in normal print are focused on the section of the Bible in focus, the second 1/2 in italic are about thinking through what this means for us—so at least think about it before moving on—it might then become more obvious).

Listen to what everyone has to say in your small group. Our enthusiasm for the great things we can see God telling us can sometimes get in the way of others chipping in if we're always beating them to the gun. Likewise, feel free to chip in if you're not an extrovert. You're amongst friends in Jesus. None of us have all the answers. Feel free to also just quietly weigh up what others have to say. It's great that you are there.

ABOVE ALL, PRAY FOR GOD TO SPEAK TO US AND HELP US ALL TO SEE JESUS...

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...and whatever you do, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

(Colossians 3:16-17)

1

'John's 7 signs

- water into wine'

setting the scene...

Relate an instance where there has been a revolutionary change – a game changer, where the accepted wisdom or protocol or technology was turned on its head after many years of settled status quo. John records how Jesus showed he was going to be the ultimate game changer...

read John 2:1-11

What's the problem at the wedding? (v1-3) Why such a big deal?

What did Jesus' mother think Jesus could do about it? (v3) Why? *(see Luke 1:26-38)*

Is Jesus' response surprising? (v4) Bear in mind John the Baptist's glowing endorsement of Jesus in John 1:29-34 and compare John 12:20-33.

If Jesus was yet to reveal his full glory, then what was he doing with the water? (v5-9a) Any clue in how the jars used were normally for Jewish ceremonial cleansing?

What about the reaction to this 'water' in v9-10? What's this emphasising?

John wants us to think about this with his editorial comment in v11. What does John think it all points to?

Think about the access the Jews had to God at the Temple and the history of their relationship with God up to this point. How is Jesus showing he will take this to a whole new level? (see John 1:16-17)

Jesus saved this family from severe cultural embarrassment. How is this such a powerful sign for how Jesus can enable us to avoid spiritual embarrassment before our God? (see Isaiah 55:1)

Some say this wasn't really a miracle, the "master of the banquet" said what he did in jest to try and cover up the family's embarrassment, or it was a story John made up to beef up Jesus' credentials, or just a parable to point to how great John thought Jesus was. How does John's recollection fly in the face of these hypotheses?

How do we sometimes settle as Christians for the old inferior wine? (see Matthew 9:14-17)

Pray in response, that we would enjoy the amazing relationship with God Jesus brings. (during wk—read John 4:46-54)

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2

'John's 7 signs - sickness into health'

setting the scene...

Imagine you're in West Africa and your loved one suddenly develops a fever — Ebola is the diagnosis, most likely just a matter of time. Think about the overwhelming feelings of hopelessness and we'll get a sense of what was racing through the father's mind in John 4 and what John is wanting us to understand about Jesus...

read John 4:46-54

What did the "royal official" already understand about Jesus? (v46-47) How would he have come to this knowledge?

Who is Jesus having a go at in v48? Why? Take in v43-45 as well.

How does this royal official show the kind of faith Jesus is looking for? (v49-50) Think about how he had wanted Jesus to come and see his son and yet Jesus had a different plan.

How was this faith wonderfully vindicated? (v51-53)

What about the impact on the rest of the family?

Once again, John adds in a thought provoking editorial comment (v54). What do you think John is trying to get us to understand about Jesus? How does this build on the first sign?

What's the difference between a miracle and a miraculous sign and wonder?

At other times, Jesus was present with the sick person and physically interacted with them (eg John 9:1-7, Lk 5:12-13, Mk 1:29-31). What does this sign in John show us is the essence of faith?

Do we need 'props' in prayer? (compare James 5:13-16)

What about when Jesus seems to say 'no'? How does this sign helps us in this? Think through how the royal official was initially given no sign, and even bigger ticket items like Jesus' word of forgiveness (eg Lk 23:42-43).

**Pray in response to this, that we would trust Jesus' word to us in every way.
(during wk—read John 5:1-18)**

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3

'John's 7 signs - life to dead limbs'

setting the scene...

Think of a time when discussing an issue with someone and the conclusion was 'bleeding obvious', but for some reason the other person refuses to acknowledge this. Why were they so intransigent?

read John 5:1-18

Why would Jesus ask this involved question with a seemingly obvious answer? (v1-6)

What had been the invalids hope or game plan to this point? (v7) *(Note, some manuscripts have the added explanation... 'and they waited for the moving of the waters. From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool... would be cured...' This explains why many gathered there., not necessarily any Biblical authority that God actually did this.)*

What's different about Jesus' approach to healing? (v8-9)

What's the problem for the Jews? (v10-13)

What's the most pressing problem for this invalid? (v14-15)

Once again, John's editorial comments help us understand what's really going on and what this 3rd sign is pointing to with Jesus. So what's the point? *(see John 1:11)*

What is so illogical about anyone rejecting Jesus?

'Thou protesteth too much.' When people respond vehemently, even violently like these Jews with Jesus, what are they revealing? What are they scared of facing up to?

If Christians just asserted Jesus was only a good man, do you think most opposition would dissipate?

If Christians stopped talking about sin, would most opposition dissipate?

**Pray in response to this, that we would realise the greatest enemy is within our hearts.
(during wk—read John 6:1-15)**

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4

'John's 7 signs - food for the masses'

setting the scene...

Think about what it's like to be *really* hungry—more than just thinking you could eat a horse, or feeling a bit peckish. How satisfying is it when you get to eat after going without for a while? How satisfying is it to know Jesus?

read John 6:1-15

How could such a large group of people forget their lunch in v1-10? (*note the "miraculous signs" in v2*)

Was Jesus teasing his disciples? Phillip was a local, from Bethsaida (*1:44*). He would have known full well there were no shops anywhere nearby.

What explains v1 1-13?

What does John think explains v1 1-13? (v14a)

Were the people correct in their assessment of this miraculous sign at the end of v14? (*see Deuteronomy 18:15, 18*)

Did Jesus think they had really understood? (v15)

Think about Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 again and how Moses had been used by God to feed the Israelites in the desert (Exodus 16, 17) and took them to the doorstep of the promised land, a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8—see Genesis 3:15, 12:3, 2 Samuel 7:12, 16, Isaiah 11:1-3 and pick up on how the Old Testament holds out this hope for someone even greater than Moses was). How does this sign fit in with all of this?

How does Jesus abundantly provide for us? (Jesus goes onto explain, especially in 6:53-58) What is the most important provision?

How do we try and force Jesus to be the kind of king we want?

What are the consequences when we try and force Jesus to fit in with our agendas? (see the rest of John 6, especially 6:26, 66-69)

**Pray in response to this, that we would find our ultimate satisfaction in knowing Jesus.
(during wk—read John 6:16-21)**

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5

'John's 7 signs - walking on water'

setting the scene...

Think about the times you have been really scared. Maybe a time when your life was suddenly nearly ended? A close call in the car or getting caught in a rip at the beach or just as they put you under for a big operation?

read John 6:16-21

Why was Jesus late? (v16-17) *(see Mark 6:45-46)*

Why were the disciples "terrified", bearing in mind these were seasoned sailors in v18-19 ? *(compare with Luke 5:4-11, 8:22-25)*

Why might Jesus' words have only added to their discomfort? (v20) *(note, "It is I" is equivalent to "I am", used many times by Jesus in John, eg 6:35, to purposely link with the Old Testament name for God—see Exodus 3:13-14)*

How were Jesus' words on the contrary, so comforting?

Any coincidence in the easier journey to shore with Jesus with them? (v21)

"Immediately" is a very common description for the impact Jesus' made. Recall the four previous 'signs' and how Jesus made a dramatic impact then. How does this all build a formidable picture as to who Jesus really is?

Is there a contradiction in us needing to fear Jesus so we will not be afraid? (see Isaiah 7:4)

Why are we in awe of miraculous signs like this, and yet we can give scant thought for the vastness of the universe that only exists because God is sustaining it every micro second?

What are some of the little things that can throw you of course in your life? How does knowing Jesus put these into perspective?

How does this sign reinforce how precious it is to be forgiven by the Almighty God through Jesus?

**Pray in response to this, that we would have a healthy fear for the Lord in our lives.
(during wk—read John 9:1-41)**

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6

'John's 7 signs - sight to the blind'

setting the scene...

The Church just needs to package the message right for our culture and then people will flood back to Church. What do you reckon?

read John 9:1-41

Why would Jesus' disciples think sin had something to do with the blind man's predicament? (v1-2) *(recall the fall out of Genesis 3 and Job's situation—the disciples have a lot in common with Job's friends)*

Jesus was about to show once again how he is the one to undo the fall out of sin in this broken world. Why did he use the mud and saliva when we know he didn't even have to be there to heal? *(recall the 2nd sign)* How might this have helped the man to understand what was going on? (v3-7)

How do you explain the reaction of the man's neighbours to his healing? (v8-13) Why so sceptical?

How did the Pharisees/Jews (the religious leaders) take this to a whole new level? (v14-34)

How did this man himself need further 'sight' even though he could now physically see? (v35-39)

How were the Pharisees an example of those who could physically "see", but were spiritually blind or "guilty"? (v40-41)

Why are there so many stories of healing of blind people included in the Gospel accounts? (see Isaiah 29:18, 35:5, 42:7, 61:1-2)

Why do you think John gives quite a lot of detail to the various reactions to the healing of this blind man? What is he wanting us to be clear about or to see?

Share an instance when you've interacted with someone about the Gospel and the person seems to understand less? How does this sign help us deal with the disappointment? (see 1 Cor12:2-3, 9:20-22)

What should be at the top of our prayer requests?

**Pray in response to this, that Jesus would open ours and others eyes to see his salvation.
(during wk—read John 11:1-54)**

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7

'John's 7 signs - life to the dead'

setting the scene...

'I'm not afraid of death.' When is this just bravado or denial? John's last of the '7 signs' faces up to the reality of death in this life...

read John 11:1-54

What kind of a friend was Jesus if he chose to stay 2 days before going to supposedly help his sick friend? (v1-6) Could he have got there in time? *(peek ahead to v39 and do the maths—it would have taken 2 days to get there)*

How do the disciples reveal our severe weakness in coming to terms with the reality of death? (v7-16) For instance, what hope did Thomas hold out?

Do Martha and Mary display greater faith and understanding of Jesus than the disciples? (v17-32)

What was Jesus' verdict? (v33-40) What is he the most upset about, especially when he knew what he was about to do in contrast to the pessimism of everyone else? *(the word translated in the NIV as "deeply moved" equals 'anger')*

How is the point or 'sign' of it all explained by Jesus' prayer? (v41-42)

It is clearly the most amazing miracle. (v43-44) How is Jesus proven to be justified in his response to this gravest of situations? (v45-54)

Many object to the miracles of Jesus as being just legend. What concrete things can you point to in this historical account of this 'sign' that might help people face up to reality?

Caiaphas inadvertently hit the nail on the head. (v49-52) How does he reveal the essence of the Gospel we must hold onto and hold out to others?

How should Christians stand out in the face of serious illness and death? (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13)

With all these 'signs', some refuse to face up to their reality. How should this "deeply move" us?

**Pray in response to this, that we would live knowing Jesus is Lord, even over death!
(during wk—get ready for mission, read John 18:28-19:16a)**

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