

The Gospel of John
John 1:35–2:25

Memory Verse: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29 ESV).

Background Helps:

After his baptism and temptation, Jesus began his public ministry. The first year of his ministry has been called “the year of obscurity,”¹ a period largely recorded in the early chapters of the Gospel of John. The Lord engaged in activity with his first disciples in various parts of the Holy Land:

- Perea (east of the Jordan River): John 1:19-51
- Galilee: John 2:1-12
- Judea: John 2:13–4:3
- Samaria: John 4:4-42
- Galilee: John 4:43-54

We will study this early period of Christ’s ministry for the next three weeks.

Lesson Helps:

This week’s daily readings cover three main events:

- Jesus makes his first disciples (John 1:35-51)
- Jesus works his first miracle, changing the water into wine (John 2:1-12)
- Jesus cleanses the temple in Jerusalem (John 2:13-25)

There are two alternative approaches to teaching such a diverse set of events:

1. Devise a lesson aim that incorporates all (or most) of the material in the whole passage (John 1:35–2:25).
2. Or, rapidly survey the entire section of Scripture (including, in this case, all three major events), and then focus your lesson aim one of the events.

Using the second approach, your lesson could focus (after the introductory survey) on John 1:35-51 with this aim: My students will learn how Jesus made his first disciples, so that they will become his disciples too. Notice the following:

- John the Baptist persuades Andrew and John (?) to follow Christ (John 1:35-39)
- Andrew brings his brother Peter to Christ (1:40-42)
- Jesus calls Philip to follow him (1:43-44)
- Philip finds Nathaniel and brings him to Christ (1:45-51)

There are two chain reactions in this sequence of events which could be pictured like this:

John (the Baptist) —→ Andrew —→ Peter

¹ A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life Christ* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1950), 19.

Jesus → Philip → Nathanael

Notice along the way the various titles given to Jesus: Lamb of God (1:36); Rabbi (Teacher, 1:38); Messiah (Christ, 1:41), Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph (1:45); Son of God (1:49); King of Israel (1:49); and Son of Man (1:51). These titles identify the one whom these disciples decided to follow. Invite your students to become his followers also.

This same passage (John 1:35-51) could also be used to encourage Christians in your class to bring their relatives and friends to Christ, in other words. Ask students to write down their own chain reaction:

[name of person who led you to Christ] → [your name] → [name of someone you could lead to Christ]

Encourage them to pray for and seek witnessing opportunities this week.

Or, using the first lesson approach described above, write a lesson aim based on all of John 2: My students will learn about the miraculous signs of Jesus, so that they will believe in him. Notice the following references to signs:

- John 2:11. The changing of the water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (2:1-11) was Jesus' first miraculous sign, manifesting his glory. As a result, "his disciples believed in him."
- John 2:18-22. As a result of Jesus' cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem, the Jews demanded that he show them a sign (2:13-18). In response, he pointed to the future sign of his own resurrection. Once again, John the writer indicates that this sign of the resurrection prompted his disciples to believe (2:22).
- John 2:23-25. Jesus performed additional signs in Jerusalem during his visit, resulting in many people believing in him (v. 23). But, in this case, Jesus apparently considered their faith to be superficial (vv. 24-25).

Following this second lesson plan (based on John 2) would tie very nicely into the apostle John's purpose in writing his Gospel: see John 20:30-31. In response to this study of Jesus' signs, invite your students to believe in Jesus Christ. Warn them against the superficial faith of John 2:23.

No matter what lesson plan you follow, be sure to include the memory verse, John 1:29.

Home Assignment:

 Read: John 3

 Memorize: John 3:16