

**The Gospel of John**  
**John 20–21**

**Memory Verses:** *“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you”* (John 20:21b ESV).

*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* (John 20:31 ESV).

**Background Helps:**

Once again this forecast covers two weeks: January 24, a lesson on the resurrection of Christ (John 20), and January 31, a lesson on the epilogue to John’s Gospel, which also highlights the resurrection (John 21). For one final time, here’s an outline of the Gospel of John:

Prologue (1:1-18)  
 Jesus’ Ministry to the World (1:19–12:50)  
 Jesus’ Farewell Ministry to His Disciples (13–17)  
 Jesus’ Passion and Resurrection (18–20)  
 Epilogue (21)

John 20 and 21 include the following scenes:

- The empty tomb (20:1-10)
- The risen Christ’s appearance to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18)
- Christ’s first appearance to his disciples (20:19-23)
- Christ’s second appearance to his disciples, including Thomas (20:24-29)
- The purpose of John’s Gospel (20:30-31)
- Christ’s third appearance to seven disciples (21:1-14)
- Christ’s recommissioning of Peter (21:15-23)
- Conclusion (21:24-25)

**Lesson Helps:**

**John 20**

In your lesson on John 20 you have a final opportunity in our study of this gospel to appeal to your students to believe in Jesus Christ (see next week’s memory verse). Here’s a possible aim:

My students will learn about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that they will believe he is the Christ, the Son of God and receive eternal life.

Three resurrection appearances in John 20:1-29 provide wonderful opportunities for storytelling, or drama (acting out the scenes), or creative writing (e.g., a diary entry by Mary Magdalene or by Thomas about their encounters with the risen Christ), or an interview (of someone impersonating Mary Magdalene or Thomas), or drawing (e.g., a picture of the empty tomb or Mary Magdalene’s or Thomas’s encounter with the risen Christ).

John 20:24-29 seems to be the climax of this gospel, especially Thomas's confession of Jesus Christ as "my Lord and my God" (cf. John 1:1). Notice the emphasis on faith in 20:25, 27, 29 and the distinction between a faith based on sight and a faith not based on sight. What then is the basis of our faith (since we have not seen the risen Christ)? John 20:30-31 supplies the answer: we believe on the basis of the eyewitness testimony of the apostles as recorded in the gospels. Invite your students to express their faith as Thomas did by confessing (aloud) Jesus as "my Lord and my God."

## **John 21**

Now that your students have had numerous opportunities to believe in Jesus Christ (over these many months of studying John's Gospel), it is now their responsibility to share this faith with others. The emphasis of the epilogue (John 21) seems to be on Jesus preparing and equipping his disciples for their future mission. A possible aim: My students will learn about Jesus' commission of his apostles, so that they will full their "mission" in life.

- You might want to start back in John 20:19-23 (part of last week's reading) where John includes his version of Christ's Great Commission (last week's memory verse): "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (v. 21b). How is Jesus' sending of his apostles (and us) like the Father's sending of Jesus? Notice that Jesus supplies his disciples with the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this mission (20:22), perhaps a foreshadowing of Pentecost. The promise in verse 23 is probably best explained by Acts 2:38 and similar verse in Acts, where the apostles preach the gospel and thereby provide people with the opportunity to either receive or reject God's forgiveness.
- The miraculous catch of fish in John 21:1-14 reminds us of the similar miracle in Luke 5:1-11 when Jesus first called his disciples to "follow me" (cf. John 21:19, 22) and become "fishers of men." Once again their initial fishing efforts were futile (21:1-5), but when Christ intervened with a miracle, their boat was barely able to contain the great catch of fish (vv. 6ff.). Might this incident be a foreshadowing of the 3000 souls "caught" on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and the continued rapid growth of the church in subsequent chapters of Acts?
- In John 21:15-23 Jesus recommissions the apostle Peter to service. In this case the assignment seems to be more pastoral than evangelistic (caring for Christ's sheep), an assignment which Peter fulfilled in both the book of Acts and in his letters of 1 and 2 Peter. The threefold question of Jesus and the threefold confession of Peter remind us of his earlier threefold denial (John 18:15-18, 25-27). Some believers may be called more to a ministry of evangelism and others more to a ministry of shepherding those who are already believers.

### **Home Assignment:**

 Read: 1 John 1:1-2:17

 Memorize: 1 John 1:9 ESV