



Union
Gospel
Press

Sunday School Superintendent

WINTER QUARTER

December 2020, January, February 2021

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Editorials	2
Preparation of Jesus' Disciples	
UNIT I: Getting Started	
Dec. 6—The Testimony of John—John 1:15-28	4
Dec. 13—Jesus' First Disciples—John 1:29-42	6
Dec. 20—The Word Became Flesh (Christmas)—John 1:1-14	8
Dec. 27—Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael—John 1:43-51	10
UNIT II: Getting to Know Jesus	
Jan. 3—Jesus' First Miracle—John 2:1-11	12
Jan. 10—Jesus Walks on Water—John 6:15-21	14
Jan. 17—Jesus: The Bread of Life—John 6:25-40	16
Jan. 24—Jesus' Hard Saying—John 6:53-54, 60-71	18
UNIT III: Going Deeper with Jesus	
Jan. 31—Jesus: The Light of the World—John 8:12-27	20
Feb. 7—Jesus' Claim to Deity—John 8:48-59	22
Feb. 14—Jesus' Response to a Dire Need—John 11:1-16	24
Feb. 21—Assurance of Victory over Death—John 11:17-32	26
Feb. 28—A Display of Divine Glory—John 11:33-34	28
Paragraphs on Places and People	30

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Editorials

BY Jack Campbell

Peace in the Identity of Jesus

This quarter, our lessons cover the first half of the book of John. Chapters 1 through 11 walk us through the entire earthly ministry of Jesus up until the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, and there are obviously many things to be learned from that part of His life. Through this curriculum, you will be studying the many signs and miracles that He performed as well as some of the interactions that Jesus had with the Jewish religious leadership throughout His ministry.

Jesus' miracles not only helped prove that He was the Messiah, but they also revealed things about His character that help us to better follow Him. Every interaction He initiates or miracle He performs opens the door for Him to teach us about who He is, and that is the focus of these lessons.

My encouragement is for you to use these lessons to not only tell about the life of Jesus but also to teach about how only Jesus satisfies as the Bread of Life. Impress on your students that He has control over the whole world, even the wind and the waves. These lessons are designed to help you and your teachers point your Sunday school to Jesus' divine character through the events of His life.

Never forget that Jesus' boldest claim is that He shares equality with God. We will cover that more specifically in lesson 10, but throughout the whole book of John, He is using signs and stories to make a bold claim—that He is the Christ, the Son of God (cf. 20:31). That claim demands a response. John focuses on the difference between those who rejected Jesus, namely the Pharisees and other religious leaders, and those who accepted Him, including His close circle of disciples.

Each lesson will also provide you the opportunity to challenge your class about how they respond to Jesus. We will look at Philip and Nathanael, who, once they believed, saw no choice but to give their whole lives to Jesus. We will also look at John 6, which notes the moment when many of the disciples fell away. This was answered, however, by Peter's words, which affirmed the truth that Jesus alone bestows eternal life.

The two lessons from chapter 8 provide a detailed look at the opposition Jesus faced from the Pharisees and other leaders. We see the lengths to which His opponents would go in making criticisms and accusations against Him. The virulence of the antagonism and the stubbornness of the unbelief can be discouraging to wit-

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ness, but this is well offset by the calm and forthright manner in which Jesus answered His critics. He never backed down an inch, but more important, He never ceased loving His enemies and holding out the hope of salvation even to them.

The final three lessons, all from chapter 11, focus on Jesus' interactions with a family facing the ultimate enemy—death. The Lord managed the entire situation to derive the greatest benefit for those who sought Him out and for His disciples. He did not merely turn tragedy into joy but used it to bring people to the brightest vision and fullest understanding of God's glory that they had yet known. Powerful truths were made clear to them—and are made clear to us—through this incident.

Yet even the demonstration of Jesus' power over death did not win over those who were determined to oppose Him. Instead, Christ's enemies merely solidified their determination to get rid of Him. From the moment of the raising of Lazarus from the grave, the wheels that led to Je-

sus' own death were inexorably set in motion.

There are many ways for teachers of children to get creative with the lessons. They may use the ABC's illustration of the first fourteen verses of John 1 (see lessons 1 and 3) to show that no matter how long anyone lives or how big we grow, they will never get beyond needing the gospel of Jesus. They can build on the ABC's illustration by making up the ABC's of John's Gospel with an acrostic that brings out the important points of those first fourteen verses that they refer to throughout the quarter.

Or the teacher of children can make up a creative chart for a classroom wall to add ideas to over the course of the quarter. This can be a large construction-paper lamp that gets a new yellow paper circle of light added each week with different descriptions of what Christ is or does. Or it can be a large book with a new word describing Christ added each week. Or a backpack to which a new supply is added each week to show how we need to be equipped as believers in Christ. Encourage the teachers to get creative and look things up online to help aid their classroom presentations. Review what they choose to make sure it goes with the concept of the quarter.

Another idea to bring home points from the lesson would be to try to align the lessons of the quarter with a new members/baptism class. Confer with your pastor about whether there is enough interest to hold such a class and tie in the lessons on baptism with any baptisms that occur in your church around that time.

May you, your teachers, and the students see Jesus' true identity and respond the right way. He is worthy of your complete trust, adoration, worship, and obedience.

LESSON 1—DECEMBER 6, 2020

The Testimony of John

Lesson Text: John 1:15-28

GOLDEN TEXT—“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18).

OPENING MOMENTS

Suggested Song (Adults)

“I Will Sing of My Redeemer” (Bliss)

Suggested Song (Children)

“All the Children Ought to Know”
(Loes, arr.)

Icebreaker

How many words can you spell without using the alphabet?

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **God seen only in Christ**
(John 1:15-18)
2. **John points others to Christ** (John 1:19-23)
3. **John prepares others for Christ** (John 1:24-28)

KEY ISSUES

All people need to know Christ. That is the main point of the lesson, and it is broken down to reflect this. The first fourteen verses of John’s Gospel are like the alphabet—they are the most basic materials we build with, and we never get beyond working with them. Emphasize to your teachers that they should study these first fourteen verses closely as part of their preparation for teaching the entire quarter, and they should be prepared to refer to them often in their classes.

Man’s biggest need is to be in relationship with God, and we first learn that God is found only in the person of Jesus Christ. In verses 1-14, John testifies that Jesus gives us access to God. This is the good news that every person needs to hear, including students of all ages. Point to the fact that Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6).

A different John, John the Baptist, was also tasked with pointing other people to Christ. One day he pointed out Jesus, who was walking among the crowds, and proclaimed to the people that here was One who was far greater than him. And even though John had started his ministry before Jesus began His, Christ was, John said, “before me” (1:15).

This lesson provides a wonderful opportunity to present the big picture concerning what the Bible is all about. John 1:17 points to two key covenants that have great importance in the unfolding of the story of the Scriptures. Our designations Old and New Testaments emphasize the centrality of these covenants (“testament” means “covenant”). The Old Covenant came through Moses at Mount Sinai. The Lord Jesus inaugurated the richer blessings of the New Covenant through His death and resurrection. It was John the Baptist who paved the way for this Messiah of a greater covenant.