



Reading Plan: October (Weeks 4-8)

Introduction

Our hope for this reading plan is that you will be changed from the inside out by encountering the living God through His word. *Do not feel like you need to answer all the questions on each day* but rather be aware of God's presence as you read, knowing that He will be your guide. Try not to rush, but read thoughtfully and feel free to stop reading when something touches your heart and let God minister as you mull over what you are reading. If you'd like, write down any impressions or insights. This will help you notice (and remember) the movement of God in your life.

Week of October 1

memory verse: John 2:19, 21-22

Day 1 – John 5: 1-9

What question did Jesus ask the sick man at the pool? What was the significance of the question?

Is there a sin, problem, or sickness that has become so much a part of your identity (“*this is just who I am*”) that you have trouble letting it go and entering into the new, healed life that Jesus offers? Spend

time thinking deeply about Romans 8:31-39. Or listen to Lauren Daigle's *You Say* and imagine it is the testimony of man at the pool (and yours!).

Jesus could have waved His hands over large groups of people and healed them, but most of the stories in the Gospels are one-on-one encounters. Why do you think that is? What might this mean for you personally? For those you encounter today?

Day 2 – John 5:9-18

We are in the middle of the series of signs that comprises the initial section of John's gospel account. But as the signs build up, so does opposition to Jesus, in outworking of John's statement in his prologue (1:10-11): "He came to his own, and his own didn't accept him".

Why did law-observant Jews confront Jesus about His healing at the pool? What was Jesus' response and why did this make His opponents even more angry?

The man at the pool had been there for almost 40 years. Jesus certainly could have waited until the following day to heal him and avoid antagonizing the Jews. Why do you think He chose the sabbath to heal? What point do you think He was trying to make about who He was and what He came to do?

Day 3- John 5:19-29

In John 5:19, Jesus talks about doing "only what he sees the Father doing." What does it mean to see what the Father is doing? What actions or attitudes might God be inviting you to that would help you see more of what He is doing?

In verse 24, Jesus says that 'whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life...has crossed over from death to life.' His listeners are confused, but Jesus is describing a type life that begins now, rather than a life that begins after we die. And the life He is describing has as much to do with *quality* of life as much as with *duration*.

If Jesus is God's doorway into this new kind of life, how does someone enter in? How does Jesus characterize this new life and how is it to be different from the old life? In what ways do you sense God drawing you more deeply into this new life?

Day 4- John 5:30-38

John keeps talking about 'evidence', 'witness', and 'testimony' and Jesus seems to be speaking as if on trial in these verses, though it's not clear what the charge is.

What 'witnesses' does Jesus call forth in this 'trial'? Which evidence does Jesus say is the most important? Why is it so difficult for Jesus' opponents to accept this evidence?

Day 5- John 5:39-47

How does Jesus 'turn the tables' and make this a trial against His accusers? What evidence does He present to condemn them?

How might they have been "looking in the right book but reading it the wrong way"? How might this be a warning to our own practices of reading, studying, sharing, teaching, or preaching the Bible?

What evidence have you found so far in our reading of John that is most convincing to believe in Jesus? What evidence might you still be looking for? Ask God for a heart that is willing to believe in the evidence about His Son and to trust in Him alone.

Week of October 8

memory verse: John 3:16, 36

In John 6, John wants us to pay attention to the fact that these events take place at the time of the Passover. He wants us to connect who Jesus is with the Jewish Passover, which was an annual remembrance of when God liberated the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, led them through the wilderness where He miraculously provided food for them, and brought them to the promised land.

Day 1 – John 6:1-15

If you were Andrew, how might you have felt when you brought the boy and his meager lunch to the attention of Jesus? What encouragement can this be to you as you bring your needs to Jesus, despite your inadequacies and insecurities?

Take time to pause and bring needs you may have to Jesus, who can turn our small offerings into feasts. G.K. Chesterton's words can be an encouragement here: "Anything worth doing is worth doing badly." Give God some effort to shape.

After their deliverance from Egypt, the people of Israel wandered homeless in the wilderness for many years, but God fed them with "bread from heaven" because the people were grumbling and complaining. If you'd like, take a few minutes to read the original story in Exodus 16.

What similarities and differences are there between this story from Exodus and John's story of Jesus feeding the five thousand? What do you think John wants us to see about Jesus through this comparison?

Day 2 – John 6:16-25

How do the disciples respond when they first see Jesus approaching the boat?

What happens when Jesus gets into the boat? What do you think accounts for their change?

Is there a situation where the winds are rising and the sea is becoming rough and Jesus' approach and invitation seems more frightening than comforting? Take time to listen closely and hear Him say, "It's me; don't be afraid."

If you'd like, read Exodus 14 (especially vv. 10-18) and notice the similarities between Moses leading Israel across the Red Sea and Jesus' crossing the sea in John 6. What does John want us to conclude about how Jesus' ways are similar to, but fuller than, the old ways of Judaism?

Day 3 – John 6:26-35

Why were the crowds still searching for Jesus? How does Jesus respond to them?

Make a list of the two appetites found in every person and two types of food. How are they the same? How are they different?

In what ways has Jesus satisfied your spiritual hunger? In what ways are you still hungry? Take some quiet time to bring these to Jesus. What do you sense Him saying in response?

Day 4 – John 6:35-59

Here John records the first of seven of Jesus' famous "I am" statements, echoing the secret and holy name that God gave Himself in Exodus 3:14. Notice how many times in this section the statement is repeated. What does Jesus mean by it?

How is Jesus a different and better manna than what Moses brought?

Jesus rebukes the crowd because they sought Him out for earthly bread rather than for heavenly bread. How did the crowd respond to this correction?

Take a moment to consider the types of things you seek from Jesus- are they more like earthly bread or heavenly bread? What about the things we as a church or small group ask for? Spend some time asking God "from now on, give us *this* bread" (v. 34).

Day 5 – John 6:60-71

Why do several of Jesus' disciples decide to turn away and not follow Him any longer (verses 60, 66)? In what ways was His teaching "difficult"?

How would you describe the disciples' responses to His hard teaching?

Has there ever been a time in your life when you have been disappointed with God or when Jesus turned out to be different than you expected Him to be and you were tempted to turn away from Him? Have you learned anything from John's gospel so far that helps you continue to follow Him?

Week of October 15

Memory verse: John 5:19, 30

John 7 takes place at another Jewish feast, the feast of booths, also called the feast of tabernacles. For this festival, all Jewish people caravanned into Jerusalem for a week of raucous music and lavish celebrations to give thanks for the harvest and to remember the time when their ancestors wandered in the wilderness and lived in tents, that is, booths or tabernacles.

Day 1 – John 7:1-9

What are Jesus' brothers trying to get Him to do? What do they think Jesus' success depends upon? How does Jesus' response show He is thinking differently?

By talking about 'the world,' is Jesus talking about the Judeans in Jerusalem who are trying to kill Him, or about something broader?

St. Francis of Assisi encouraged Christians to "wear the world like a loose garment, which touches us in a few places and there lightly." What does this mean about our goals in life, relationships with others, and attitudes toward possessions? What kind of space would 'wearing the world loosely' open up in your life?

Day 2 – John 7:10-18

By challenging Jesus' origins, the crowd is really challenging the authority of this teaching. According to Jesus, what are the two measures of a true teacher?

In verse 17, Jesus suggests that the reason the crowd can't see that His teaching comes from God is because they've closed their minds to what God really wants from them. Are there any areas of your life where you need to open your mind and heart more fully to what God wants of you in order to understand Him better?

Why did Jesus say it was appropriate to heal on the Sabbath? What was the crowd getting wrong? Have you ever seen religious principles put ahead of love? Have you ever done so?

Day 4 – John 7:31-39

On each day of the feast, amidst trumpet blasts, blazing torches, singing, and dancing, large vessels of water were poured out on the floor of the temple court as a reminder of the rainfall that made the harvest, and their livelihood, possible. With this in mind, how would you explain the significance of Jesus' words in v. 37-38? How is He like living water?

Imagine yourself at this festival and picture yourself approaching Jesus and answering His invitation to come to Him and drink. What would this mean to you? What would you need from Jesus to have rivers of living water spilling out of you? Take a moment to ask Him for this.

Day 5 – John 7:40-53

So far in his account, John has shown us a Messiah that is very different than the one people expect. People were expecting the Messiah to be a second Moses who meets their physical and national needs and who establishes an *earthly* kingdom. But Jesus claims to be a better kind of Moses who brings God's *spiritual* kingdom to earth. Jesus doesn't want to just fix their earthly lives; He came to bring them NEW lives. But many people just don't get it.

Look again through chapters 6 and 7 and note all the misunderstandings of Jesus. How is Jesus inviting people to view Him with 'heart sight' instead of eyesight?

Is there any place in your life where you are expecting Jesus to change your earthly life but instead, He is looking to deepen your spiritual life? In a quiet moment, bring this to Jesus, along with any other questions or doubts about who He is.

Week of October 22

memory verse: John 6:35

Day 1 – John 8:1-11

How is this very public situation a trap for Jesus? What would the Pharisees accuse Jesus of if He told them to let her go? If He told them to stone her? How does He outsmart them?

In this story, Jesus exposed a common sin: a desire to expose and punish the sins of others, while ignoring our own sins. Note that the ones Jesus confronts in this story are the religious people. In what way would this story fit today's world?

Are there any individuals or people groups toward which your attitude is condemning and self-righteous?

What is the Pharisee's goal for the woman caught in adultery? What is Jesus' goal for her?

Day 2 – John 8:12-20

(The rest of John 8 gives an account of some back-and-forth between Jesus and His accusers that can be difficult to follow. To get you started, here is a rough idea of what is going on: The Pharisees ask Jesus where He gets His authority, since in Jewish tradition any claim would require two witnesses. Jesus says His witnesses are first, Himself, and second, God His Father, which puts them over the edge.)

Jesus continues His teaching during the Feast of Tabernacles with a second "I am" statement. What is Jesus really claiming in vs. 12? How is walking in the light better than walking in the darkness? How have you sensed God guiding you into the light of life?

Jesus' reference to His Father leads to another claim: that He came from God. How does this claim heighten the tension between Jesus and the Jews?

Day 3 – John 8:21-29

What questions did the religious leaders ask Jesus in verses 19, 22, and 25? Why did they continue to ask Him again and again who He was? Were these questions asked to discover the truth or to resist the truth and justify a refusal to believe?

Consider Jesus' claim: "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He." Here Jesus is talking about His being lifted off the ground in His coming crucifixion. What is ironic about this statement? What do you learn about Jesus from it?

Day 4 – John 8:30-36

In verses 31-32 Jesus says, "If you hold to my teaching...then you will know the truth." How is this backward from the way we normally get to the truth about something? Why do you think it is that we get to knowing by first holding to the truth? What does it mean to hold to Jesus' teaching? What does Jesus mean by being free?

Think about John's theme of heart sight versus eye sight. How does the Jew's response in verse 33 show that they were looking at things wrong?

How does Jesus lead them to think deeper than just earthly freedom and slavery? What is the worse slavery than that which they had suffered in Egypt?

Day 5 – John 8:37-47

Make note of all the claims Jesus makes about Himself in John 8, including His claims in verses 12, 19, 23, 29, 31-32)

Which of these claims means the most to you?

How does Jesus make the conflict crystal clear in verse 47? What do you think it means to “belong to God?”

From this passage, what can you do for someone who is honestly seeking God?

Week of October 29

memory verse: John 8:28-29

Day 1 – John 8:48-59

What false assumptions confuse the issue of spiritual freedom for Abraham’s descendants? What other family membership is Jesus talking about?

What are you proud of in your religious heritage? Like the Pharisees, has it been a handicap in any way?

What additional claims does Jesus make about Himself in verses 51, and 56-58. Why does Jesus’ final claim cause such an outrage? (See Exodus 3:14)

Day 2 – John 9:1-12

What does the disciples’ question in verse 2 reveal about their beliefs about people born with disabilities? In what way does Jesus correct their eye sight with heart sight?

“We have to stop thinking of the world as a kind of moral slot-machine, where people put in a coin (a good act, say, or an evil one) and get out a particular result (a reward or a punishment) ... No: something much stranger, at once more mysterious and more hopeful, is going on. The chaos and misery of this present world is, it seems, the raw material out of which the loving, wise and just God is making his new creation.” N.T. Wright

How does this quote help you better wrestle with difficult questions about disabilities and suffering?

Day 3 – John 9:13-23

Why did the Judeans seek out the parents of the blind man (vv. 18-19)?

Put yourself in the man’s parents’ place. They feared being put out of the synagogue because that would have meant loss of social standing, their livelihood, and perhaps their lives.

Now put yourself in the Pharisees’ place. They feared a powerful threat from outside of their trusted system that threatened to alter their influence, routine, and familiar way of life.

Which fear can you relate to more? What fears tend to restrict your faith and stifle your love? How can you follow Jesus as He leads you out of the darkness of fear and into the light?

Day 4 – John 9:24-34

What argument does the blind man use to defend that Jesus is from God?

Why do the Judeans respond by throwing him out of the synagogue?

After reading about the blind man's testimony in chapter 9, how are his actions in the face of hostility a model for you?

Day 5 – John 9:35-41

Review John 9 over again. This time, make special note of the man's growing spiritual insight. How is his attitude changing?

In contrast to the man's growing spiritual insight, how are the Pharisees progressing?

What blindness is the result of sin? How do you think guilty people see again?