

Knowing Jesus and His Teachings



SABBATH—DECEMBER 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 21:1–19; John 21:20–22; John 1:4–10; John 4:46–54; John 12:32.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘You carefully study the Scriptures [the Holy Writings from the Old Testament] because you think that they give you eternal [everlasting] life. Those [Holy Writings] are the same Scriptures that tell about me!’ ” (John 5:39, ICB).



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THE BOOK OF JOHN ends in the same way that the Book of Mark ends: with a meeting between Jesus and His followers in Galilee. This final lesson is about that meeting. We also will talk about how we know Jesus and the Bible. This idea is an important topic in the Book of John.

Jesus' followers were with Him for more than three years. Again and again, Jesus told His followers what would happen to Him. But the followers weren't really ready for Jesus to die or wake up from the dead.

Why weren't the followers ready? They didn't trust what Jesus said to them.

Today, we can be in danger of doing the same thing that the followers did. We may read the Bible, but we may think or feel that we don't really need to obey it. We may not accept its spiritual truths as the light from heaven that should guide our behavior. Sad to say, too many Christians think and feel this way.

In our last week in John, we will look at some ideas that will help us know Jesus better. When we know Jesus better, we will want to live in Him and obey His teachings.

MEETING IN GALILEE (John 21:1–19)

Read John 21:1–19. What important truths do these verses show us? What do these Bible truths teach us about God’s mercy? Why do we need to empty our hearts of all pride?

John 20 ends with the reason that John wrote the Book of John. We may think John should end his book there, right? But John wrote one more chapter. Chapter 21 begins with some of the followers who are back in Galilee. Peter suggests that the followers should spend the night fishing on the lake. But they catch no fish that night.

In the morning, a Stranger stands on the beach. The Stranger tells the followers to throw their nets off the right side of the boat. The followers do as the Stranger tells them to do. Then the followers catch so many fish that they can’t pull the net back into the boat! This same miracle happened at the start of their work with Jesus (read Luke 5:1–11). When this miracle happens, John right away knows that the Stranger is Jesus. John tells Peter, who jumps in the water and swims to the shore.

In John 21, Jesus asks Peter three questions. All three questions are about Peter’s love for his Master. Before Jesus died on the cross, Peter swore that he would die for Jesus (John 13:37). Then Jesus told Peter that he would reject Jesus three times (John 13:38). But at this meeting in Galilee, Peter doesn’t make himself the most important part of the conversation with Jesus. Peter makes Jesus the most important part. Peter says, “ ‘Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you!’ ” (John 21:17, ERV).

When Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him, Jesus uses the word “agapaō,” which means “to love” in the Greek language. Peter always answers with a different Greek word for “to love.” This word is “phileō,” which means “to love” but as a friend. So, some people say that John writes “phileō” to show that Peter didn’t learn how to love as God loves.

But this idea is not correct. Peter answers the way he does because his heart is empty of all pride. We also see that Jesus accepts Peter’s answer because the Lord gives him back his work to do for God. When we work for God, our hearts must be empty of all pride. Then we will look to Jesus and not to ourselves for strength, wisdom, and help to do His work.



The Stranger tells the followers to throw their nets off the right side of the boat.

KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS (John 21:20–22)

Read about the conversation between Jesus and Peter in John 21:20–22. What question did Peter ask Jesus? What did Jesus say to Peter? How did Jesus' answer help Peter?

Jesus gave Peter back his work and told him, “ ‘Follow me’ ” (John 21:19). Peter follows Jesus in his heart and down the beach. Then Peter turns and sees John following Jesus, too. So, Peter asks Jesus about John: “ ‘Lord, what will happen to him?’ ” (John 21:21, NIV).

When Jesus gave Peter back his work, the Lord also told Peter how he would die (John 21:18). Peter wanted to know about John's death, too. Jesus tells Peter not to worry about another follower. Peter needed to think about following Jesus.

Read John 21:23–25. How did Christians during New Testament times misunderstand Jesus' words in these verses? How did John correct their misunderstanding?



People will disappoint you and may hurt you, too. But Jesus will never let us down.

People misunderstand what Jesus meant when He said, “ ‘Maybe I want him to live until I come. That should not matter to you. You follow me!’ ” (John 21:22, ERV). People thought that Jesus was saying that He would come back before John died. As time passed and John grew old, people got worried about what would happen if Jesus didn't come back before John died. (Of course, that is what happened. John died.) John explains this misunderstanding. He says that Jesus was not making a promise about the future. Jesus was saying that He had the power to make happen whatever He wanted to make happen because He was God.

Let us keep our attention on Jesus, not on other people. This idea is very powerful. Jesus is our Savior and no one else. People will disappoint you and may hurt you, too. But Jesus will never let us down.

Our studies for Tuesday through Thursday will talk about the idea of understanding the Bible. When we understand the Bible, we will know Jesus better and know how to follow Him. Jesus is our Master and our Guide.

How often do other people disappoint you or hurt you? What lessons did you learn from those experiences?

LIGHT AND DARK (John 1:4–10)

Read John 1:4–10; John 3:19–21; John 5:35; John 8:12; John 9:5; John 11:9, 10; and John 12:35. What two different things are these verses talking about? Why is the answer so important to our understanding Bible truth?

Life on this earth is filled with sin. That is why John says this earth is a dark place. People don't want to know Bible truth. On our own, we can't understand God or know who He is.

“People on their own can't know or understand God. ‘That knowledge is higher than the heavens and deeper than the place of death [the grave]. So what can you do? How can you learn it all?’ Job 11:8 [ERV]. When God adopts us as His children, He shows us who He is. ‘No eye has seen the things God has made ready for those who love him. No ear has heard about them. No person's heart has ever thought of them.’ [1 Corinthians 2:9, WE]. ‘God has shown these things to us through [with] his Spirit.’ [1 Corinthians 2:10, NIV].”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 412, adapted.

Jesus “told us plainly about God” (John 1:18, WE). The words written as “told us” come from the Greek word “exēgeomai.” In the Greek language, “exēgeomai” means “to explain.” John shows us that Jesus is the messenger from heaven. Jesus explains what it means to know God. Jesus is the only Person who can help us to know God.

How does Jesus talk about the Jewish spiritual leaders and their faith? Read John 8:42–44 for the answer.

When people don't follow Bible truth, they follow their own ideas. But real Christians must accept that Jesus is the Truth and the Light. We must follow Him in our understanding of the Bible. Satan “is a liar” (John 8:44, ERV). If we aren't careful, we will be in danger of doing the same thing the Jewish leaders did. So, we must obey God. We must give ourselves to Jesus in faith. Or we may read the Bible and say that it means what we want it to mean. This mistake is easier to make than we think.



When people don't follow Bible truth, they follow their own ideas.

TRUE AND FALSE TEACHINGS ABOUT GOD
(John 4:46–54)

Read the story in John 4:46–54. Why did the leader in this story come to Jesus? What caused this man's problem?

This man came to Jesus for help. But before the man came, he decided to believe in Jesus only if Jesus healed his child. So, we can say that this man's ideas about God came from human doubts and fears. Human ideas about God are limited. So, human ideas should not become the reason for our beliefs about the Bible and its teachings.

When we believe what the Bible teaches, we put God and the Bible first (John 4:48; John 6:14, 15; 2 Timothy 3:16). We must accept the Bible with faith. Then the Bible will explain its teachings to us. The Bible helps us understand the Bible. Human ideas must not control our understanding of the Bible. The Bible must control our thinking and what we, as humans, believe and accept as truth.

If we believe Jesus and His teachings, then we will believe the Bible and its teachings (John 5:46, 47). “If you continue to accept and obey my teaching, you are really my followers” (John 8:31, ERV). If we doubt the Bible, Jesus' teachings can't live in us (John 5:38). “But there is a judge for all those who refuse to believe in me and do not accept what I say. The message I have spoken will judge them on the last day. That is because what I taught was not from myself. The Father who sent me told me what to say and what to teach” (John 12:48, 49, ERV).

What does it mean to “hear” God's Word, the Bible? When we hear God's Word, we obey Him. So, hearing is more than just knowing information. Hearing means that we do the things that God asks us to do. “People who really want to do what God wants will know that my teaching comes from God. They will know that this teaching is not my own” (John 7:17, ERV).

When we obey God and do the things He asks us to do, we show that we love God. “Jesus said, ‘The one who loves Me will obey My teaching. My Father will love him. We will come to him and live with him’” (John 14:23, NLV).

How does our obedience to God show our love for Him?



The Bible helps us understand the Bible.

LIVING IN JESUS (John 12:32)

Read Jesus' announcement in John 12:32. In what ways does this announcement show the control and power that Jesus has in heaven and on earth?

As we already saw, the Book of John shows us Jesus. But we must be willing to know God and obey Him. In the Book of John, people who meet Jesus must decide. They must decide to accept Bible truth. Or they will choose to reject it. Many people met Jesus and made choices about His teachings: Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, the royal leader, the man at the Pool of Bethesda, the 5,000 men who ate the bread and the fish, Jesus' brothers, the Jewish spiritual leaders, the man born blind, Mary and Martha, and Pilate.

Man-made Bible teachings start with human ideas to decide what is Bible truth about God. Man-made teachings about the Bible led people away from God in the past and will continue to do so in the future (read Revelation 14:1–12). In the end times, people will put human wisdom above God's wisdom. Then they will try to force false worship on everyone on earth.

What is the secret to spiritual growth and health? Read John 15:1–11 for the answer.

The secret to success is for us to stay connected to Jesus. Jesus is God's Word, the Bible, in Person. Jesus is the Bread of Life, the Light for all people, the Door for God's sheep, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection or waking up from the dead, and the Life. Jesus is also the Way to God, the Truth, and the True or Real Vine.

As we saw already, our Three-in-One God is named the Godhead. The Godhead includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Godhead and Their Word, the Bible, will lead us to Them. "God talks to us in His Word. We will hear many voices talking to us. But Jesus warned us to be careful of the ones who say, Here is the Savior. Or there is the Savior. How will we know if someone teaches Bible truth? We must compare everything they say with the Bible."—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 3, 1888, adapted. Then we must give up any idea that the Bible shows us is false or wrong.



Jesus is the Resurrection or waking up from the dead, and the Life.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “The angels of God are always traveling from earth to heaven and from heaven to earth. Jesus did many miracles. He healed the sick and suffering. God worked with angels to do the miracles that Jesus did on this earth. In the same way, God gives us every blessing because of Jesus. The angels bring these blessings to us. When Jesus became a man, He joined Himself to sinners. Because Jesus is God, He can go to God’s throne for us. And so, Jesus is the way for people to communicate with God, and the way for God to communicate with people.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 143, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think about all the different stories in the Book of John. Which story shows you God’s love the most? Share with the class why you think that story is so powerful.
- ② How should someone search for Bible truth?
- ③ Why is it so hard to let the Bible, and not self, decide what is truth? Will our human thinking always get in the way of how we understand and explain the Bible? Why must we understand this weakness in ourselves? Why is it important to empty our hearts of all pride when we study the Bible?
- ④ The history of Western Christianity is filled with terrible stories about what happens when people use the Bible truth to support false ideas or to control other people. What are some of these examples that you can think of from history? What lesson can we learn from them today?
- ⑤ Explain the Book of John in your own words. What is the book’s most important message for us today?



“The angels of God are always traveling from earth to heaven and from heaven to earth.”

SUCCESS IN A VILLAGE IN ALASKA

Pilot Jim Kincaid made his living flying from village to village in the state of Alaska in the United States of America. The villages were far away from the big cities. Taking off and landing was the easy part for Jim. Jim thought it was more difficult to find Alaskan Indians who wanted to hear and accept the Good News about Jesus.

Jim thought he was in trouble when he landed his small plane at a village about 150 miles north of the city of Fairbanks. Jim was flying Bible book sellers from village to village to sell Bibles and other Christian books. As Jim parked his plane, many people from the village drove out to meet him. Then they parked their trucks in a circle around his plane. The villagers did not welcome Jim.

One villager said to Jim, “Who are you?”

Another villager said, “What are you doing here?”

In that instant, Jim remembered a name of someone who lived in the village. The man from the village went to one or two meetings that Jim held in Fairbanks sometime earlier. Jim said to the villagers, “Is Robert Frank in town?”

When Jim said Robert Frank’s name, the people stopped looking angry. Then they became nice and helpful.

One villager asked Jim, “Oh, you know Robert Frank?”

Another villager told Jim, “We will take you to see him!”

The villagers took Jim to Robert.

Robert was eating when Jim arrived. Robert didn’t know who Jim was right away. Jim helped Robert remember how and why they knew each other. Then Robert remembered, and he was very nice to Jim. Robert offered Jim some food. Then the villagers welcomed Jim and the Bible book sellers into their village. Jim and the Bible book sellers had success because Jim remembered someone’s name.

Jesus also knows people’s names. Jesus said that He, the Good Shepherd, “ ‘calls his own sheep, using their names, and he leads them out’ ” (John 10:3, ERV).

Jesus knows our names. As His followers, shouldn’t we also follow His example and learn the names of people we are working with Him to save?

Jim said, “When you know someone in a village or his name, that information can help the whole village accept and trust you. That’s how it is in any village or community. If you remember someone’s name, you can win the hearts of the people.”

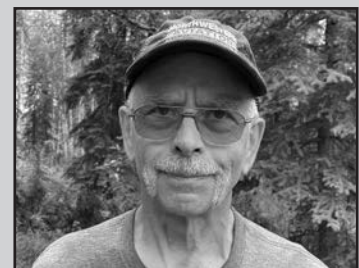
Part of this 13th Sabbath Offering will help to open a new center for Alaskan Indians in Bethel, Alaska. Thank you for planning to give a big offering this Sabbath.

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



“What are you doing here?”



Jim Kincaid