

The Gospel of John, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 26: The Resurrection and the Purpose of the Gospel

John 20:1–21:25

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

John 20 and 21 bring the Gospel to its climax: the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the confession of Thomas ("My Lord and my God!"), John's stated purpose for the entire Gospel, and the restoration of Peter. The most important doctrinal block of the lesson, and one of the most important in the whole study, is Question 9, on John's purpose statement (20:30–31). The teacher must frame the saving "belief" John describes as a living, obedient faith, the faith the whole Gospel has portrayed, that confesses Jesus as Lord and God, receives Him, and follows Him. This must be connected to the New Testament plan of salvation (faith, repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ, followed by faithful discipleship), and must not be reduced to mere mental agreement or presented as salvation by faith only. Significant doctrinal weight also belongs at Questions 1 (the bodily resurrection) and 3 (Thomas's confession and the deity of Christ).

At the same time, this final lesson is rich with formation and serves as the capstone of the whole study. The resurrection grounds our hope and peace; Thomas's journey speaks to honest doubt; Peter's restoration shows how the risen Christ deals with those who fail; and the repeated call to "follow me" sends every reader into believing, obedient discipleship. The teacher should help students both grasp the purpose of the Gospel and respond to it personally, and should help them look back over the whole study to name how Christ has formed them.

So aim at both: a clear, careful grasp of saving faith as living and obedient and of the bodily resurrection and deity of Christ, and a heart that believes, is restored, and follows. The disciple we are forming believes in the risen Son of God with a faith that obeys, and follows Him from here.

Question 1

Student Question:

The tomb was empty, the grave clothes were left behind, and the risen Jesus appeared to His disciples (20:1–20). What is the significance of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and why is it the foundation of the Christian faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter opens with the empty tomb and the appearances of the risen Jesus: the rolled-away stone, the grave clothes left behind, Mary meeting Jesus in the garden, the disciples seeing His

hands and side (20:1–20). The bodily resurrection is presented as a real, physical, historical event.

Draw out the significance of the bodily resurrection. Jesus did not merely live on in some spiritual sense; He rose bodily from the grave, the same Jesus, now alive forevermore, with a real (though glorified) body that could be seen and touched. The grave clothes left behind and the wounds He showed confirm that it is truly He, truly risen.

Stress that the resurrection is the foundation of the faith. Paul says that if Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile and we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). The resurrection vindicates everything Jesus claimed, proves the Father accepted His sacrifice, defeats death, and grounds our hope of our own resurrection. Without it, there is no gospel; with it, everything Jesus said is confirmed.

Apply it to the students' faith and hope. The resurrection is not a peripheral doctrine but the ground on which everything stands. Because Christ is risen, our sins are forgiven, death is defeated, and our hope is sure. Ask students how the reality of the bodily resurrection grounds their confidence and hope, especially in the face of death.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The real, bodily, historical resurrection of Jesus (John 20:1–20).
- The resurrection as the foundation of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:17).
- The resurrection vindicating Christ's claims and defeating death.
- The ground of forgiveness and the hope of our own resurrection.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the significance of the bodily resurrection of Jesus?
- Why is it the foundation of the Christian faith?
- How does the resurrection ground your confidence and hope?

Question 2

Student Question:

The risen Jesus came to His fearful disciples and said, "Peace be with you" (20:19, 21). Where do you most need the peace of the risen Christ in your life right now, and how does His resurrection ground that peace?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The risen Jesus comes to His frightened disciples, hiding behind locked doors, and His first word is "Peace be with you" (20:19), repeated in verse 21. The resurrection brings peace to fearful hearts.

Draw out the source of this peace. The disciples were huddled in fear after the crucifixion, their world shattered, afraid for their lives. The risen Christ does not rebuke them first; He speaks peace. His resurrection is the ground of that peace: death is defeated, the Lord is alive, and all His promises are sure. Peace flows from His victory.

Connect it to the peace promised earlier. In the upper room Jesus had said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” (14:27). Now, risen, He delivers that peace in person. The peace He gives is not the absence of trouble but the presence of the victorious, living Lord. It can steady the most fearful heart.

Apply it. Help students bring their own fears to the risen Christ who speaks peace. Behind whatever locked doors of fear they hide, the risen Lord comes and says, “Peace be with you.” Ask students where they most need the peace of the risen Christ right now, and help them see that this peace rests on His resurrection victory, not on their circumstances.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The risen Christ bringing peace to fearful hearts (John 20:19, 21).
- Peace grounded in the resurrection victory.
- The fulfillment of the promised peace (John 14:27).
- Peace as the presence of the living Lord, not the absence of trouble.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you most need the peace of the risen Christ right now?
- How does His resurrection ground that peace?
- What “locked door” of fear do you need Him to enter?

Question 3

Student Question:

Thomas refused to believe without seeing, then confessed, “My Lord and my God!” (20:25, 28). What is significant about Thomas’s confession, and how does it affirm the deity of Jesus at the climax of the Gospel?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Thomas, who refused to believe without seeing, meets the risen Jesus and makes the highest confession in the Gospel: “My Lord and my God!” (20:28). Jesus receives the confession without correction. At the climax of the Gospel, a disciple confesses Jesus as God.

Draw out the significance of the confession. “My Lord and my God” is an explicit confession of the deity of Christ. Thomas addresses Jesus as God, and Jesus accepts it. This is the destination toward which the whole Gospel has been moving, from “the Word was God” (1:1) to “My Lord and my God” (20:28). The Gospel opens and closes with the deity of Christ.

Note the personal nature of the confession. Thomas does not say “the Lord and the God” but “my Lord and my God.” True faith is not merely affirming that Jesus is divine in the abstract but personally claiming Him as one’s own Lord and God. This is the confession of a heart surrendered.

Apply it. Help students see that the deity of Christ, established throughout the Gospel, calls for the personal confession Thomas makes. To believe rightly is to bow before Jesus as “my Lord and my God.” Ask students whether they have made Thomas’s confession their own, personally claiming Jesus as their Lord and their God, and how the climax of the Gospel calls them to that surrender.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Thomas’s confession, “My Lord and my God,” affirming the deity of Christ (John 20:28).
- Jesus receiving worship as God without correction.
- The Gospel framed by the deity of Christ, from 1:1 to 20:28.
- True faith as personally confessing Jesus as Lord and God.

Discussion Prompts

- What is significant about Thomas’s confession?
- How does it affirm the deity of Jesus at the climax of the Gospel?
- Have you made Thomas’s confession personally your own?

Question 4

Student Question:

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (20:29). Since you are among those who believe without having seen, what helps your faith stay strong when you cannot see, and where is it being tested?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

To Thomas, and past him to us, Jesus says, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (20:29). Jesus pronounces a blessing on those who believe without having seen Him, which includes every reader since.

Draw out the blessing on unseen faith. The disciples saw the risen Christ; we have not. Yet Jesus calls those who believe without seeing “blessed.” Our faith rests not on having seen Him with our own eyes but on the trustworthy testimony of those who did, recorded for us in Scripture (which is precisely why John wrote, 20:31). We are not at a disadvantage; we are blessed.

Address what sustains unseen faith. Faith that cannot see is sustained by the reliable witness of Scripture, by the ongoing work of the Spirit through the word, by the testimony of the changed

lives of God's people, and by our own growing experience of walking with the risen Christ. It is reasonable faith, grounded in evidence and testimony, not a leap in the dark.

Apply it. We live by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), and our faith is tested precisely because we cannot see. Ask students what helps their faith stay strong when they cannot see, and where it is being tested right now. Encourage them to lean on the trustworthy testimony of Scripture and the company of God's people, and to count themselves among those Jesus called blessed.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Jesus' blessing on those who believe without having seen (John 20:29).
- Faith resting on the trustworthy testimony of eyewitnesses in Scripture.
- Unseen faith as reasonable, grounded in evidence and testimony.
- Living by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Discussion Prompts

- What helps your faith stay strong when you cannot see?
- Where is your unseen faith being tested right now?
- How does it encourage you that Jesus called such faith blessed?

Question 5

Student Question:

John states his purpose: these things "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" (20:30–31). What is John's stated purpose, and what does it tell us about why the signs and stories were chosen?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

John states the purpose of his entire Gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs... 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" (20:30–31). This is the interpretive key to the whole book.

Draw out the purpose. John did not write to record everything Jesus did, but selected signs and stories with a clear aim: that readers would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and through believing have life. The whole Gospel is evangelistic and life-giving in purpose, designed to produce saving faith.

Show how this explains the structure we have studied. The signs (water to wine, the healings, the feeding, walking on water, the raising of Lazarus), the discourses, the "I am" sayings, and the death and resurrection were all chosen and arranged to lead the reader to faith in Jesus and to life in His name. Every lesson in this study has been part of John's single purpose.

Set up the fuller treatment at Question 9 by noting the two parts of the purpose: believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (the content of faith), and having life in His name through believing (the result). The next question will examine carefully what kind of “believing” John means. For now, help students see that the whole Gospel was written to bring them to this faith and life. Ask students how knowing John’s purpose shapes the way they read his Gospel.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- John’s stated purpose: belief that leads to life (John 20:30–31).
- The signs and stories selected to produce saving faith.
- The whole Gospel as evangelistic and life-giving in design.
- The content of faith: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Discussion Prompts

- What is John’s stated purpose in writing?
- What does it tell us about why the signs and stories were chosen?
- How does knowing his purpose shape the way you read the Gospel?

Question 6

Student Question:

The whole Gospel aims at producing faith that leads to life. As you finish this study, how has your own faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, grown or been challenged, and where do you most want it to deepen?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question invites students to reflect on their own faith as the study concludes. John wrote so that readers would believe and have life; the question asks how the reader’s faith has grown or been challenged through the study.

Encourage honest reflection on the journey. Over twenty-six lessons, students have walked through the whole Gospel, from the Word made flesh to the empty tomb. Ask them to consider how their understanding of and trust in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, has grown, deepened, or been stretched along the way.

Make room for honesty about challenges. Faith is not always a straight line of growth; some may have wrestled with doubts, hard teachings, or areas of resistance. That honesty is healthy. The aim is not to perform spiritual progress but to take an honest inventory of where their faith stands now.

Press toward a forward longing. Ask each student where they most want their faith to deepen from here. The study is ending, but the journey of faith continues. Help them name a specific

area, in trust, in obedience, in knowledge of Christ, where they long to grow, and to carry that longing into their ongoing walk with the risen Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith as a journey that grows and is tested.
- Honest inventory of where our faith stands.
- The legitimacy of wrestling with doubts and hard teachings.
- A forward longing for deeper faith beyond the study.

Discussion Prompts

- How has your faith in Jesus grown or been challenged through this study?
- Where do you most want your faith to deepen from here?
- What part of John's Gospel most affected your trust in Christ?

Question 7

Student Question:

By a charcoal fire, Jesus three times asked Peter, "Do you love me?" and three times commissioned him to feed His sheep (21:15-17). What does Peter's restoration teach us about how the risen Christ deals with those who have failed Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

By a charcoal fire, the risen Jesus restores Peter. Three times He asks, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?", and three times, after Peter affirms his love, He commissions him: "Feed my lambs... Tend my sheep... Feed my sheep" (21:15-17). The threefold question matches Peter's threefold denial.

Draw out the tenderness and fullness of the restoration. Peter had denied Jesus three times around a charcoal fire (18:18); now, beside another charcoal fire, Jesus gently gives him three opportunities to affirm his love. Jesus does not pretend the denial did not happen, nor does He shame Peter; He leads him through it to full restoration and recommissioning. The risen Christ restores the one who failed.

Stress what this teaches about how Christ deals with failures. Jesus does not discard those who fail Him. He seeks them out, restores them, and calls them back to love and service. Peter's failure did not disqualify him; the risen Christ recommissioned him to shepherd His people. This is grace toward the fallen, not a lowering of the call but a restoration to it.

Apply it pastorally. Many believers carry the weight of having failed Christ, and they wonder if they are finished, set aside, disqualified. Peter's restoration says otherwise. The risen Christ restores those who turn back to Him and calls them again to love and serve. Ask students how

Peter's restoration shapes the way they understand Christ's response to their own failures, and set up the personal application in the reflection and capstone.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The risen Christ restoring Peter after his denial (John 21:15–17).
- The threefold question matching the threefold denial.
- Christ restoring and recommissioning those who fail, not discarding them.
- Grace toward the fallen who turn back to Him.

Discussion Prompts

- What does Peter's restoration teach about how Christ deals with failure?
- Why is it significant that Jesus recommissioned Peter to serve?
- How does this shape the way you understand Christ's response to your failures?

Question 8

Student Question:

After restoring Peter, Jesus said simply, "Follow me" (21:19, 22). After all you have seen of Jesus in this study, what does it look like for you to follow Him from here, and what holds you back?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After restoring Peter and speaking of the cost of discipleship, Jesus gives a simple, two-word command: "Follow me" (21:19, 22). It is His call to the restored Peter, and it is the call on which the whole Gospel ends.

Draw out the simplicity and depth of the call. After everything, the resurrection, the restoration, the commission, it comes down to two words: "Follow me." Discipleship is, at its heart, following Jesus, ordering our whole lives around Him, going where He leads, becoming like Him. The Gospel does not end with an explanation but with a summons.

Note that Jesus calls Peter not to compare himself with others. When Peter asks about John, "Lord, what about this man?", Jesus redirects him: "What is that to you? You follow me!" (21:21–22). Following Christ is personal; we are not to be distracted by comparing our path with others'. Each is called to follow Him.

Apply it as the study concludes. After all the students have seen of Jesus through this Gospel, His deity, His signs, His love, His death and resurrection, the fitting response is to follow Him. Ask each student what it looks like for them to follow Jesus from here, and what holds them back, a fear, a comfort, a comparison, a competing loyalty. The aim is a renewed, personal commitment to follow the risen Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “Follow me” as the summons on which the Gospel ends (John 21:19, 22).
- Discipleship as following Jesus with our whole lives.
- Following Christ as personal, free from comparison with others (John 21:22).
- A renewed commitment to follow the risen Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it look like for you to follow Jesus from here?
- What holds you back from following Him more fully?
- Where are you distracted by comparing your path with others’?

Question 9

Student Question:

This is the climax and stated purpose of the whole Gospel. John says he wrote “that you may believe... and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31), and the believing he describes throughout the Gospel is a living, obedient faith that confesses Jesus as Lord and God (20:28), receives Him, and follows Him (21:19). How does the whole Gospel of John frame saving “belief” as this living, obedient faith rather than mere mental agreement, and how does this connect to the way the New Testament describes coming to Christ in faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, and then following Him in faithful discipleship?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the most important doctrinal block of the lesson and a fitting climax to the whole study. John states his purpose: he wrote “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31). The crucial question is what kind of “believing” John means, and the answer must be drawn from the whole Gospel.

Show, from the Gospel itself, that the believing John describes is a living, obedient faith, not bare mental agreement. Throughout John, true belief is never mere intellectual assent. It receives Christ (1:12), comes to Him and feeds on Him (6:35, 51), abides in His word (8:31), follows His voice (10:27), confesses Him as Lord and God (20:28), and follows Him (21:19). John even shows that some who “believed” in a shallow sense did not truly abide (2:23–25; 8:30–31), and that genuine belief obeys, since “whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life” (3:36). The faith that saves, in John, is a faith that takes hold of Christ, confesses Him, and follows Him.

Connect this clearly to the New Testament plan of salvation. The living, obedient faith John describes is exactly the faith that, in the rest of the New Testament, expresses itself in coming to Christ. It believes in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God, it repents of sin (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), it confesses Him as Lord (Romans 10:9–10; compare Thomas’s “My Lord and my God”), and it is baptized into Him for the forgiveness of sins, being united with His death and raised to new life (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:27). From there it continues in faithful discipleship,

following Him (21:19) and continuing in His word (8:31). This is one coherent response to the risen Lord, not a set of disconnected steps.

Be clear and kind about what this excludes. John's purpose statement is sometimes used to teach salvation by "faith only," as though believing meant nothing more than a mental decision or a single inward moment that requires no obedience. But the whole Gospel, and the whole New Testament, will not allow this. The believing John commends is the living, obedient, Christ-confessing, Christ-following faith we have watched throughout this Gospel. We do not earn salvation, it is the gift of God received by faith, but the faith that receives it is never a bare, obedience-free assent. As James says, faith without works is dead (James 2:17, 24), and as Jesus said, the one who loves Him keeps His commandments (14:15).

Bring the whole study to its climax in personal response. John wrote so that we would have this living faith and, through it, life in Jesus' name. Help students see that the right response to the entire Gospel is not merely to agree that Jesus is the Son of God, but to believe in Him with a faith that confesses Him as Lord and God, turns from sin, is united to Him, and follows Him. For any who have not yet responded to the gospel this way, this is the moment to do so. For those who have, it is a call to a deeper, more obedient following. Ask students to consider honestly whether their faith is the living, obedient faith John describes, and to respond accordingly, in belief, repentance, confession, baptism if they have not obeyed the gospel, and in faithful discipleship.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- John's purpose: believing that leads to life in Christ's name (John 20:31).
- Saving belief in John as a living, obedient faith that receives, confesses, and follows Christ (John 1:12; 8:31; 10:27; 20:28; 21:19).
- Belief joined to obedience throughout the Gospel (John 3:36; 2:23–25).
- The connection to the plan of salvation: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9–10; Romans 6:3–4; Galatians 3:27).
- A clear rejection of salvation by faith only or by bare mental assent (James 2:17, 24).
- Continuing in faithful discipleship as the ongoing shape of saving faith (John 8:31; 21:19).

Discussion Prompts

- How does the whole Gospel frame saving belief as a living, obedient faith?
- How does this connect to faith, repentance, confession, and baptism?
- Is your faith the living, obedient faith John describes? How will you respond?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the entire Gospel of John, from the Word made flesh to the empty tomb and the call to follow. What is the one most significant way Jesus has formed you through this study, and what is one specific step of believing, obedient discipleship you will take in response?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question is the climax not only of the lesson but of the entire twenty-six-lesson study. It asks students to look back over the whole Gospel, from the Word made flesh to the empty tomb and the call to follow, and to name the one most significant way Jesus has formed them, along with one concrete step of believing, obedient discipleship.

Help students take in the sweep of the journey. They have walked through the deity and incarnation of Christ, His signs, His great “I am” sayings, His confrontation with sin and unbelief, His death and resurrection, and His call to follow. The whole Gospel was written to produce faith and life; this is the moment to ask what it has produced in them.

Encourage a single, significant takeaway. Rather than a vague sense of having learned a lot, press for the one most significant way Jesus has formed them through the study, a truth that gripped them, a sin He exposed, a fear He healed, a deeper trust, a clearer view of who He is, a call to follow He made unmistakable.

Then press for one concrete step. The study should end not merely with reflection but with response, the very response John wrote to produce. Ask each student to name one specific step of believing, obedient discipleship they will take, whether that is obeying the gospel for the first time, recommitting to follow Christ, taking up a particular obedience, or deepening their walk in a named way. Close the entire study where the Gospel closes: with the risen Christ saying, “Follow me,” and let each student answer Him personally.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The whole Gospel aimed at producing living faith and life in Christ.
- Looking back over the study to name how Christ has formed us.
- A single significant takeaway rather than vague impressions.
- The study ending in concrete, obedient response: “Follow me.”

Discussion Prompts

- What is the one most significant way Jesus has formed you through this study?
- What specific step of believing, obedient discipleship will you take?
- How will you answer the risen Christ’s call, “Follow me”?