

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN**WHEN NIGHT
FALLS**

STUDENT LESSON

Open it

1. Is there anything in particular that you were afraid of as a kid in the dark?

Daily Devotions

Day 1 — Today's Theme: Explore It

Read John 13:21–38.¹

2. How does Jesus “expose” the disciple who is going to betray Him?
3. What time is it? What is going to happen now at this time?
4. What new commandment does Jesus give His disciples?
5. What does Jesus tell Peter he will do?

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Day 2 — Today's Theme: Among Us

Read John 13:21–29.

What a plot twist in the story of Jesus' life and ministry! The buildup throughout the whole Gospel would lead you to believe that at some point, the religious leaders would have had enough and just arrest Jesus and be done with it. No one would really suspect that it would be one of Jesus' own disciples that would turn Him in!

I'm sure you have felt the pain of having someone betray you. When that happens, we start asking questions like, "Were they ever really my friend?" "How could this have happened? I would have never thought of it!" "Why would they do this to me? What did I do to deserve this?" While those feelings and questions flood our minds when someone we love stabs us in the back, it's clear that Jesus wasn't so surprised.

While His disciples were shocked and surprised that Judas would do this, Jesus knew it was coming. As a matter of fact, we could probably take it a step further: Not only did Jesus know it would happen, He meant for it to happen. Let's not forget that Jesus told His disciples in John 13:18, "*I know whom I have chosen.*"

There was no pleading with Judas to not move forward with his plan to betray Jesus. Jesus didn't try negotiating and pleading His own case. There was no trying to stop Judas. But instead, Jesus tells Judas, "Get on with it" (my personal paraphrase).

Jesus knew His mission. He knew what lay ahead. This was all part of the plan.

6. Why did God still punish Judas for betraying Jesus if he was chosen for that purpose? Do you think that is fair and just for God to do that?

7. Did Jesus ever treat Judas any differently than the other disciples even though He knew all along that he would betray Him? What does this tell you about Jesus' new commandment to His disciples in 13:34?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: Nightlight

Read John 1:5 and 13:30–33.

“And it was night.”

Four simple words that contain such profound meaning. On a number of occasions, Jesus has been hinting to His disciples that He wouldn't be with them forever but that His time was short, telling them that the day is coming to a close and night is falling upon them.² John, looking back on all that has happened leading up to and following Jesus' death, helps us understand that it was then that night had fallen.

John is no doubt working on multiple levels here. On one level, it was probably literally night. But this whole light and dark contrast throughout his gospel has been used to demonstrate the divide between good and evil. Jesus said back in John 3:19–20, “*And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.*”

Though it seems like darkness (evil) is on the move, Jesus is always in control. We should think back to John 1:5, that darkness has not overcome the light. As a matter of fact, Jesus tells His disciples that this is the moment when the Son of Man is glorified, as if to tell them that in the darkness, the light shines even brighter. Darkness will not overcome the light, but rather make it shine even brighter!

8. It's recently been said that “I feel like ‘God is in control’ is one of the most unhelpful Christian platitudes [sayings] someone can say in [times of terrible evil and suffering].” What do you think about that statement?

9. What place does telling people that “God has a plan” or that “God is in control” have in serving and ministering to others in their distress and suffering?

10. With so much evil in the world today, do you believe that God is still in control of all things? Is God as “hands-on” as He used to be, or do you think that God was only in control of the evil that would lead to the cross?

² See John 7:33; 11:9–10; 12:35–36; 13:19; 13:30–33

Day 4 — Today's Theme: Jesus Swag

Read John 13:33–35.

You're leaving us? You can't leave! What are we supposed to do when You're gone?

You can almost imagine these thoughts going through the minds of the disciples as Jesus tells them that they cannot come with Him where He is going. So He helps bring clarity to whatever confusion they might have been feeling in that moment by giving them some instructions, instructions that aren't all that complex: Love each other.

The command to love one another wasn't a new commandment. Our minds take us to Jesus answering the lawyer's question about the greatest commandment where He says, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets*" (Mt. 22:37–40). But Jesus qualifies this new commandment by saying that not only are they to love each other, but they are to love each other **as Jesus loved them**.

By loving each other **as Jesus loved them** they will show the world that they are His disciples.

It's a simple commandment, but not an easy one. It's easy to grasp, but at times very difficult to do because, let's be honest, we aren't always the most lovable people. But when we love each other **as Jesus loves us** it shows the rest of the world what kind of God we serve and that we are following in His footsteps.

11. Describe what it means and looks like to love someone as Jesus loves you.

12. What prevents you from loving other people like this?

Day 5 — Today's Theme: Ghosted

Read John 13:36–38.

It made sense that the stuck-up religious leaders couldn't follow Jesus where He was going, but His own disciples, even Peter? He loved Him. He was devoted to Him. He believed in Him. Why would Jesus say that Peter wouldn't be able to follow Him? Peter would follow Jesus even to the death.

In his own devotion to Jesus, Peter would be willing to lay his life down for his Rabbi. But the irony here is that it isn't time for Peter to lay his life down for Jesus, but for Jesus to lay His life down for Peter. Peter just wasn't grasping the significance of what was unfolding in front of him. He didn't understand what Jesus' death would mean, that the reason that he couldn't follow Jesus right now was because only Jesus could offer the sacrifice that would cover the sins of those who would believe.

And so Jesus gives Peter a tough pill to swallow. Instead of committed devotion in the face of adversity, Peter would instead ghost his Rabbi. Not only would he not follow Jesus to death at this time, but he would even deny Him three times.

I can imagine the thoughts and feelings that Peter must have been feeling at that point. *Who is He to say that about me? He doesn't understand how committed I am. I'll prove Him wrong.*

What Peter had to learn the hard way, and we all must learn it at some point, is that Jesus knows us far better than we know ourselves.

13. God knows you far better than you know yourself. What things does God tell you about yourself in the Bible that are maybe hard to hear? How do you respond to those things?

14. How does viewing things first through the lens of what Jesus has done for you, then what you do for Jesus change your perspective on what it means to be one of His disciples?