

## Investigating Jesus in the gospel of John

by Chris Barrett, adapted from Sam Nikkel

The New Testament Gospels provide us with ancient biographies of Jesus of Nazareth. Most of our friends have never had the chance to look at these first-hand accounts of Jesus life. In the midst of our friendships we have a wonderful opportunity to introduce our friends to Jesus through these writings. This little document describes one approach to looking at Jesus in the Gospel of John with friends.

We can introduce the idea of discussing stories from a biography of Jesus with a friend, starting with John's thesis statement in John 20:30,31: *"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."*

This ancient author, John, believed that there is something special about Jesus, and that by trusting him we somehow become more fully alive. Our friends may not agree with this statement but the purpose of this discussion is not to solicit agreement with John but to understand why he believes what he does about Jesus. John obviously believed strongly in Jesus since he was willing to suffer for his faith – he was exiled to the island of Patmos (see Rev 1:9). Together we can try to get inside of John's head and to understand why he believes what he does.

Not including the resurrection of Jesus, there are 8 miracles recorded in the gospel of John, 7 before his death and 1 after:

- Changing water into wine – John 2:1-11
- Jesus heals the royal official's son – John 4:43-54
- Jesus heals at the pool – John 5:1-15
- Jesus feeds 5000 – John 6:1-15
- Jesus walks on water – John 6:16-24
- Jesus heals a blind man – John 9:1-41
- Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead – John 11:1-43
- Miraculous catch of fish – John 21:1-14

One at a time these stories can be discussed starting with 3 questions:

- 1/ Who are the personalities involved?
- 2/ What is (are) the point(s) of tension in the story?
- 3/ How does this story support John's thesis?

It is not necessary to be restricted to the miracle stories. The three questions are valid for many other stories that John records: clearing the temple (John 2), chatting with Nicodemus (John 3) and the woman at the well (John 4), his speech at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7), etc.

It is important to keep in mind that we can be intentional about providing the opportunity to look at Jesus but God is the one who draws people to Jesus (John 6:44).