

## Reading Schedule for January 15-21, 2018

Maybe you made a resolution to read the Bible every day. I hope your desire is more than a resolution, because resolutions end, on the average, by January 18<sup>th</sup>. That means you will quit before you even get to chapter 9 of John. I have greater confidence in you than that and I know that reading the Gospel of John will enhance your spiritual life. We are only going to do three chapters this week because the chapters are fairly long. I want you to soak it in and apply it to your life.

**January 15 – John 8:1-11:** “When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’” (v.7) This may be the key statement in the story, so I made it the focal point as I pick a verse in our reading every day. But overall, scholars question the story because it is not in all of the earliest manuscripts. However, the message of the story is very significant. It challenges us about judging others. We have learned in Romans that the law never changes anyone. Jesus gave this woman grace so that she would realize her need to repent. Romans 2:4 says the kindness of the Lord is meant to lead us to repentance. That’s why he said, “Go and leave your life of sin,” in verse 11. Jesus stands ready to forgive any sin in your life, but confession and repentance mean a change of heart. There is no guarantees this woman changed, but if she genuinely repented, her life could go in a different direction as she would begin to honor God by turning away from sexual sin. How do you respond to this succinct story about judging, forgiveness and repentance?

**January 16 – John 8:12-30:** “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” (v.12) I don’t know if I’ll highlight every one of the statements Jesus uses to illuminate his identity, but I am drawn to this one. Jesus said he was the light of the world, and Matthew records that we are the light of the world. We need his light before we can be a light to others, of course. The idea is that Jesus illuminates the path before us in a world of darkness. We follow after him. I like the statement that we are Christ followers. Without the Lord I would grope in darkness. Earlier Jesus makes a connection with light and life. “In him was life and that life was the light of men.” (John 1:4) I John 1:7 says that “. . . if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” How do you understand Jesus being the light of the world? What difference does that make in your life?

**January 17 – John 8:31-59:** “‘Very truly I tell you,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I AM!’” (v.58) Just as I did two days ago, I point to an “I AM” statement. This is actually one of the clearest statements Jesus gives about his divinity. Not only did Jesus say that he existed before Abraham, but he points to the holy name of God as presented in Exodus 3:14, “I AM.” There is no question that Jesus was proclaiming himself to be the Son of God. When he declared this statement, the Jews picked up stones to stone him. What else do you learn about Jesus in these verses? In my Bible there is a lot of red ink. Jesus is teaching many important truths about himself in these verses. The most profound thing he said is that he is God.

**January 18 – John 9:1-12:** “‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’” (v.3) This may not seem like a profound statement to you or me, but it was to those who were listening. When someone had a malady to such extremes as blindness, the common belief was that they were suffering because of some great sin. We live in a fallen world where good behavior is

not always rewarded and bad behavior not always punished. In other words, innocent people sometimes suffer, and guilty people sometimes get off scot-free. But God knows all and he will reveal the motives of each person’s heart one day. The point of the story seems to be that Jesus has the power to help us. Whether we might suffer from disease, disability or disappointment, why not ask him, “Why did this happen to me? What am I supposed to learn from it? How will you make me stronger? What should I do differently?” Let the challenging things in your life be an opportunity for spiritual growth. That principle is found throughout the Bible. Does that make sense? How do you respond to this story?

**January 19 – John 9:13-41:** “He replied, ‘Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!’” (v.25) I like this man’s testimony. He cannot explain everything, but he reveals the simplicity of a profound miracle. What does it matter about Jesus’ background or motivation? All the man says is, “I was blind but now I see.” I sense faith in him. Even as we look at verses 32 & 33 we see his courage. He is persecuted right from the start for his testimony about Jesus changing his life. Many people have strong presuppositions about God and the meaning of Jesus. These Jewish leaders are an example of that. But no one can take away his experience of being touched by Jesus and changed forever. I appreciate the sincerity and the courage of this man. What do you appreciate about this story?

**January 20 – John 10:1-21:** “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (v.11) This is my favorite identification about Jesus, pointing back to Psalm 23, in my opinion. In Psalm 23 it says the Lord is my shepherd, he will provide everything I need. Jesus is identifying himself in a pastoral way to the people. He was going to validate his identity by laying down his life for the sheep, just like a shepherd would out in the field. The parallel about the role of a shepherd and what Jesus does for us is uplifting to me. The shepherd protects, he guides, he cares for and is a constant companion for the sheep. Aren’t those good qualities that point us to the person of Jesus?! The main quality of the shepherd is the one who points the way. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” I need the Lord’s guidance. I need a good shepherd in my life. Jesus provides that for me. How about you? What do you learn from this interesting teaching that Jesus gave about himself?

**January 21 – John 10:22-42:** “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” (v.27) Most people don’t take it literally, that Jesus would speak to us so that we would hear his voice. But why not?! I don’t know that I could say that I have heard the audible voice of Jesus, but I have sensed his distinct nudges that push me in the right direction. The message here is one of relationship. Jesus wants to speak to us; and when he does we identify it as coming from him. There are many other profound statements in these verses as to the fact that the Father never lets go. Jesus identifies very strongly with the Father as he says, “The Father is in me and I in the Father;” in verse 38. Reading the Gospel of John is quite unique to the other Gospel records, meaning Matthew, Mark and Luke. That’s why I love it so much, because he says things in a way that really pushes us to a deeper connection with Jesus and a deeper allegiance to his authority as the Son of God. I am being renewed in my faith as I look up to Jesus, the One who has authority. Does that make sense? How are you responding to the teaching of Jesus in these chapters?

**Prayers: Pray for the outreach we have to Hallman Elementary, the Food Bank we have this Saturday, and the relationships that we have in our workplace. May the Gospel be seen and shared so that people will come to know Jesus.**