

If the Gospel of John Is Exclusively Evangelistic, Why Is There Discipleship Material?

By Bob Wilkin

Evangelistic, Yes, But Exclusively Evangelistic?

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30–31).

In his commentary on John 1-6, called *Faith in His Name*, Zane Hodges says this, “Purpose of the Book: To Produce Faith (20:30-31)” (p. 15).

In *Maximum Joy*, Dave Anderson says, “The First twelve chapters of John are about evangelism” (p. 16). He goes on to suggest that John 13-21 has a discipleship purpose (p. 17).

In *Grace, Salvation, and Discipleship*, Charlie Bing says, “John wrote to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ...But [his Gospel] also contains...truth for Christian living and discipleship (p. 115).

Why Zane Hodges Felt It Vital to Free Grace Theology That We Hold Firmly to the Exclusively Evangelistic Purpose of John

Zane’s concern was that if someone sees John’s Gospel as having a dual purpose of evangelism and discipleship that this would diminish the importance of John’s Gospel.

According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, ALL Scripture Is Profitable for the Believer

Here is a simple syllogism:

Major Premise: All Scripture is profitable for believers to be equipped.

Minor Premise: John’s Gospel is Scripture.

Conclusion: John’s Gospel is profitable for believers to be equipped.

Thus While John’s Gospel Is Not Written to Believers There Is Much Believers Can Learn from It

How to Remain Assured

John’s Gospel repeatedly shows that assurance is of the essence of saving faith. The way for a believer to remain assured is simple: keep on believing Jesus’ promise of life.

How to Share Your Faith/Assurance

WWJD: What would Jesus do? That is a good question, especially concerning evangelism. We do not need to wonder what He would do because John’s Gospel tells us how He evangelized.

He did not use booklets. He did not ask people to pray a prayer.

What He did is told people who has everlasting life and who does not.

To Live in Light of Christ’s Soon Return

In the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus’ final discourse, He tells His followers that he is coming again and He tells us to live in light of His soon return.

The Importance of Abiding in Christ’s Word

To abide in Jesus is to have His words abide in you. You must regularly partake of God’s Word so that your mind is renewed and your life is transformed (John 15:5-8; Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1-3).

Restoration of Fellowship and Ministry

Peter famously denied Christ three times. In John 21 the Lord Jesus gives Peter 3 opportunities to confess his love for Jesus. Each time Peter does the Lord tells him to feed His flock and tend His sheep.

Confession of Sins for Fellowship Forgiveness

When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, He illustrated the truth of 1 John 1:9.

The Work of the Spirit Empowering Our Daily Walk

The Lord indicates that He would send the Holy Spirit as their Helper (John 14:26). In one of the least understood incidents in John's Gospel, Jesus, after His resurrection but before His ascension, breathed on the disciples and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22).

Answering Claims that Parts of John's Gospel Are Directed to Believers Concerning Discipleship

What about the Upper Room Discourse?

What about John 8:30-32?

The unbeliever learns in this text that once a person comes to faith in Christ he is not automatically set free from bondage to sin. The truth in God's Word sets the believer free from sin's bondage in his experience.

What about John 10:10?

Some Free Grace people see in this verse a secondary purpose statement for John's Gospel.

What about John 21?

An unbeliever reading John 21 should be moved. Jesus does not abandon His disciples if they deny Him. He gives them further opportunity to serve. If an unbeliever is not born again after reading the first 20 chapters of John, the last chapter might well bring him to faith in Christ.

What about 30 Uses of Pisteuo eis in John 1-12 and Only Three or Four in John 13-21?

Anderson uses this statistic to bolster his claim that only John 1-12 is evangelistic (*Max Joy*, p17).

The problem with this argument is that if there is anything in John 13-21 which is clearly evangelistic, then his argument collapses.

Conclusion

John's purpose is exclusively evangelistic. Yet the Holy Spirit intended John's Gospel, as He intends all Scripture, to be profitable for believers as well.

If you ask an unbeliever to read a chapter of John each day, I suggest you have them read the entire Gospel, and not just chapters 1-12. All of it can be used by the Lord to lead someone to faith in Christ.

We can rejoice that He gave us an entire book on evangelism. We should rejoice that God gave us the Gospel of Belief. What a blessing it is to us.