

The Grain of Wheat

JOHN 12:20-36 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

Jesus goes down like a seed to draw everyone to himself.

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 17): John 11:17-53, Resurrection and Life. Its big idea: Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this?
- After this passage (day 19): John 13:1-17, Love to the End. Its big idea: The Lord of all knelt to wash you before asking you to kneel.

Open

Recall last time: Jesus raised Lazarus and called himself the resurrection and the life. That miracle is what made the leaders plot his death (11:53). Ask: What is something in your life that only worked once you let go of it? Read John 12:24 aloud. Then give the big idea: Jesus goes down like a seed to draw everyone to himself. Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. Sir, We Want to See Jesus (John 12:20-26, about 13 min)

The one thing: When outsiders come looking, Jesus says his hour has come to fall like a seed.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus answers a request to see him by talking about his death?

2. Father, Glorify Your Name (John 12:27-33, about 13 min)

The one thing: Jesus chooses the cross with open eyes, and from it he draws the world.

Ask: What does it tell you about Jesus that he admits his soul is troubled?

3. Who Is This Son of Man? (John 12:34-36, about 10 min)

The one thing: Jesus doesn't argue the crowd's question. He invites them to believe in the Light.

Ask: What makes a Messiah who dies hard to accept, then or now?

Close (never cut it)

End where John ends: on Jesus. Say it plainly: the seed went down, he was lifted up, and he draws everyone, including the outsider and the one who drifted. Read his own words, 'While you have the Light, believe in the Light,' then v.36b, and let the quiet sit.

PROTECT THE ENDING

If section 3 starts late, drop its discussion question, read vv.34-36 aloud, and go straight to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 1, 3, 2, 4, 5 (top to bottom) · Feelings: The Greeks happy, Philip and Andrew happy, Jesus worried, The crowd worried · Code: BELIEVE IN THE LIGHT

Act it out: One child curls up small as the seed and the teacher 'plants' them. Then the other children rise up slowly around them as the big harvest of fruit.

1. Sir, We Want to See Jesus

JOHN 12:20-26 · ABOUT 13 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Outsiders come asking to see Jesus (vv.20-22).
- Jesus answers: the hour has come (v.23).
- A seed must die to bear fruit, and his followers follow him (vv.24-26).

Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and DIES, it remains only a seed.

If anyone serves Me, he must FOLLOW Me.

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus answers a request to see him by talking about his death?

When outsiders come looking, Jesus says his hour has come to fall like a seed.

MUST COVER

- v.23: Earlier in John, Jesus kept saying his hour had not yet come (for example, to his mother at a wedding, 2:4). Outsiders asking for him is the signal that it has now come.
- v.24: A seed kept stays alone. A seed that dies bears much fruit. The Greeks at the door are the first of that fruit.

IF THERE'S TIME

- The Greeks were likely 'God-fearers': non-Jews who worshiped Israel's God but could enter only the temple's outer court.
- v.25 'hates his life' is a way of saying 'loves less.' Compare Luke 14:26 with Matthew 10:37, where the same teaching is worded 'loves more than me.'

Illustration idea: A seed packet left in a drawer for ten years is still just seeds. Plant one and you get a whole plant heavy with fruit.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Because really seeing him means seeing the cross.
- Listen for: Because his death is how outsiders like them get in.

If it drifts: If it turns into a lesson on self-denial or giving, ask: 'Who is the seed in v.24?' Start with Jesus before us.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

They want to see Jesus, and he says: watch the seed go down. That is how he draws everyone to himself.

Short on time? Drop both optional points and sum up vv.20-22 in one sentence.

Bridge → Saying it is one thing. Next we hear what it cost him to walk toward it.

2. Father, Glorify Your Name

JOHN 12:27-33 · ABOUT 13 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- Jesus is honestly troubled and still does not turn back (v.27).
- Heaven answers his prayer out loud (vv.28-30).
- Lifted up on a cross, he will draw everyone (vv.31-33).

Now My soul is TROUBLED.

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will DRAW EVERYONE to Myself.

Discuss: What does it tell you about Jesus that he admits his soul is troubled?

Jesus chooses the cross with open eyes, and from it he draws the world.

MUST COVER

- v.27: This is real dread and a real choice. He names the prayer 'save Me from this hour' and prays 'glorify Your name!' instead.
- vv.32-33: John says plainly that 'lifted up' points to 'the kind of death He was going to die': a cross. That is where he draws everyone.

IF THERE'S TIME

- v.29: John honestly records that many heard only thunder. v.30 says the voice was for them.
- Matthew 26 (another Gospel's account of his last night) shows the same troubled soul and the same yes in the garden of Gethsemane.

Illustration idea: A firefighter stops at the door of a burning house. He is scared, and he goes in anyway because someone is inside.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: He was really human. He felt fear.
- Listen for: It makes his choice mean more, because he wasn't numb to it.

If it drifts: If the thunder debate takes over, point to v.30 and ask what the voice actually said: God's name glorified.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Troubled and willing, he goes into the ground like the seed. Lifted up, he draws everyone to himself.

Short on time? Skip both optional points. Read v.27 and v.32 slowly and move on.

Bridge → The crowd heard all this and had a question, and that is where the last section begins.

3. Who Is This Son of Man?

JOHN 12:34-36 · ABOUT 10 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The crowd can't fit a dying Christ into what they expected (v.34).
- Jesus answers with an invitation: walk in the Light (v.35).
- Believe in the Light while you have it (v.36).

Walk while you have the LIGHT.

While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become SONS OF LIGHT.

Discuss: What makes a Messiah who dies hard to accept, then or now?

Jesus doesn't argue the crowd's question. He invites them to believe in the Light.

MUST COVER

- v.34: They expected a Christ who would 'remain forever,' and a lifted-up Son of Man did not fit. Their question, 'Who is this Son of Man?', is this whole plan's question.
- vv.35-36: The Light is with them 'for a little while longer.' Then v.36 ends: 'He went away and was hidden from them.'

IF THERE'S TIME

- Earlier in John (8:12), Jesus called himself the light of the world. Here he gives the same claim one last time to the crowd.

Illustration idea: Hiking at dusk, you don't stand and debate the sunset. You walk while you can still see the trail.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Death looks like losing.
- Listen for: People want a strong winner, not someone who suffers.

If it drifts: If it becomes a debate about prophecy, note that Jesus answered their question by pointing to himself, the Light standing in front of them.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

Who is this Son of Man? He is the seed that goes down and the Light lifted up to draw everyone to himself.

Short on time? Read vv.34-36 aloud, skip the discussion, and go straight to the close.

Bridge → He went away and was hidden. Let that quiet ending carry you into the close.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Outsiders at the door. Read vv.20-22. Some Greeks, outsiders to Israel, say, 'Sir, we want to see Jesus.' Ask: if you could see him, what would you want to know?
2. The seed. Read vv.23-24. His answer to 'we want to see' is a seed that must die to bear much fruit. Let your friend react before you explain.
3. Not spin. Read v.27. Someone making the best of a defeat doesn't usually say beforehand that his soul is troubled. He names the fear and still chooses.
4. Lifted up. Read vv.32-33. He says that when he is lifted up he will draw everyone. Note that those Greeks were the first of many from every nation.
5. The crowd's question. Read vv.34-36. The crowd asks, 'Who is this Son of Man?' Leave that question with your friend, unpushed, and let the passage's own ending stand.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

"Wasn't the voice just thunder?"

John admits many heard thunder. He doesn't ask you to stake everything on a noise. The real question is the man and what he said about his death.

"Isn't calling your execution a triumph just spin?"

Spin usually comes after the event. He said it before, admitted dread, and predicted it would draw people. You can weigh whether that happened.

"Does 'hates his life' mean I should hate myself?"

No. It's a way of saying 'love less.' He's talking about what you grip tightest, and the same verse promises life kept.

"Why does he hide at the end?"

John doesn't fully explain. The sense is that the Light doesn't stay on demand. He said 'a little while longer,' and then he went.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).

If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.

If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.

If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.

If you've taught for years: Don't lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.

If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.

If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn't serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).

If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?

If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Admit what is hard

v.25 is a hard verse, and in v.27 Jesus himself admits trouble.

If you're new: Say 'this is a hard verse' before explaining 'hates his life.'

If you've taught for years: Let the class sit with v.27. Jesus' honesty gives them permission to be honest too.

2. Plan for the skeptic and the grieving

The thunder objection is real, and last week's Lazarus story may stir grief.

If you're new: Have a short answer to the thunder question ready from vv.29-30.

If you've taught for years: Invite the skeptic's objection early in section 2 instead of waiting for it.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

It ends with Jesus hidden and an invitation, not a tidy to-do list.

If you're new: Close on v.36 and add no homework.

If you've taught for years: Resist turning the seed into a giving lesson. Keep Jesus as the seed first.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you'll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: What's something that only worked once you let go of it?

- use an object: Hold up a dry seed in one hand and a full head of wheat in the other. Ask what had to happen between them.
- start in the text: Read v.21, 'Sir, we want to see Jesus,' and ask what the rest of the passage shows them.

CLOSINGS

- call back to the opening: Hold up the seed again: it had to go into the ground, and so did he.
- allow quiet reflection: Read v.36b, 'He went away and was hidden from them,' and keep a full minute of silence.
- send them out with a verse: Send them out with v.36: 'While you have the Light, believe in the Light.'

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- 'Hates his life' (v.25) lands on someone who already struggles with self-worth or despair.: Explain gently that it means 'loves less,' not self-contempt, and that the same verse promises life kept. Check in privately afterward if someone seems hurt.
- Someone says the voice was just thunder and proves nothing.: Agree that John records the thunder. Don't overclaim. Point to v.30 and to what the voice said, and thank them for the question.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: "Thanks. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can't answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: "Great question. Let's catch it after class so we can finish the passage."

READ THIS WEEK

- John 3:14-15
- 1 Corinthians 15:35-44
- Philippians 2:5-11

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/12-20-36/lesson

The Grain of Wheat

JOHN 12:20-36 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: “Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a seed. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.” John 12:24

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus goes down like a seed to draw everyone to himself.

1. SIR, WE WANT TO SEE JESUS · JOHN 12:20-26

- Outsiders come asking to see Jesus (vv.20-22).
- Jesus answers: the hour has come (v.23).
- A seed must die to bear fruit, and his followers follow him (vv.24-26).

Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and _____, it remains only a seed.

If anyone serves Me, he must _____ Me.

Discuss: Why do you think Jesus answers a request to see him by talking about his death?

2. FATHER, GLORIFY YOUR NAME · JOHN 12:27-33

- Jesus is honestly troubled and still does not turn back (v.27).
- Heaven answers his prayer out loud (vv.28-30).
- Lifted up on a cross, he will draw everyone (vv.31-33).

Now My soul is _____.

And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will _____ to Myself.

Discuss: What does it tell you about Jesus that he admits his soul is troubled?

3. WHO IS THIS SON OF MAN? · JOHN 12:34-36

- The crowd can't fit a dying Christ into what they expected (v.34).
- Jesus answers with an invitation: walk in the Light (v.35).
- Believe in the Light while you have it (v.36).

Walk while you have the _____.

While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become _____.

Discuss: What makes a Messiah who dies hard to accept, then or now?

Read this week: John 3:14-15 · 1 Corinthians 15:35-44 · Philippians 2:5-11

For Kids: The Grain of Wheat

JOHN 12:20-36 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus gave his life so everyone could come to him.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

- ☐ Greeks come wanting to see Jesus.
- ☐ Jesus talks about a wheat seed.
- ☐ Philip and Andrew tell Jesus.
- ☐ Jesus prays, Father, glorify Your name!
- ☐ A voice speaks from heaven.

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

The Greeks: happy · sad · worried

Philip and Andrew: happy · sad · worried

Jesus: happy · sad · worried

The crowd: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

L C C B K V Y H V
I W H E A T U A R
G U H P F U G N G
H O F H V G F D R
T V S I P C B R E
Y O E L K Y D E E
F I E I N D R W K
B C D P N U N O S
Y E P F R U I T D

GREEKS · PHILIP · ANDREW · WHEAT · SEED · FRUIT · LIGHT · VOICE

4. SECRET CODE

1=B 2=E 3=G 4=H 5=I 6=L 7=N 8=T 9=V

1 2 6 5 2 9 2 5 7 8 4 2 6 5 3 4 8

5. DRAW IT!

Draw one seed under the ground and a tall wheat plant above it with lots of grain.

6. MEMORY VERSE

“While you have the Light, believe in the Light.” John 12:36 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

Jesus is like a seed because _____. _____