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(John: The Beloved Gospel)

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Introduction

John: The Beloved Gospel

God has given us four special stories of the life of Jesus. These are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

We might think that one story would be enough, because it was inspired by God. But each story shows a different side of the life, ministry (work), teaching, and sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus is so great that no one Gospel writer could describe Him completely. As Ellen G. White so clearly explained it: Jesus' story was given "through different writers. Each writer gives his side of the story while going over the same history."—Adapted from *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21.

By using different authors to write about Jesus, God meets different readers where they are. Each writer "has an experience of his own. This different experience adds to the full knowledge that is shared with many different minds."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 22. In the past century, some authors have used the method of telling the same story from different views. Many people thought this was a new idea.

But Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did the same thing almost two thousand years ago.

In movies or biographies¹ (such as the book *The Desire of Ages*), many people have tried to share a complete picture of Jesus' life based on all four Gospels. These efforts have been a great blessing. We learn much more, however, by studying the different views of each of the Gospel writers. People with different ways of thinking will receive a richer experience with Jesus as they study the different views of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Under the Holy Spirit's leading, each of these men wrote his own special view of Jesus' life and teaching. This quarter, we will look at John's view.

John's book has often been called "the beloved Gospel." John is called "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23-25; John 19:26; John 20:2; John 21:20-24). John was very close to Jesus. So John's Gospel explores Jesus' character and mission in a way that Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not.

The Gospel of John seems designed to reach a group of people who never met anyone who knew Jesus personally. We face this same problem, so John speaks to us in a way the other Gospels do not. John's Gospel was designed to answer what may be the most serious question a modern Christian can have: How can I have a living relationship with Jesus when I cannot see Him, hear Him, or touch Him?

This quarter's lessons have two purposes. First, they offer a special picture of Jesus' character from John's viewpoint. Second, they list the steps a believer needs

¹biographies—books about the lives of real people.

to take toward a deeper relationship with Jesus. John has given encouragement, hope, and faith to millions of people who love Jesus.

This quarter's lesson author, Jon Paulien, is head of the New Testament Studies Department at Andrews University Seminary. He is a recognized expert in the book of John.

We have never met Jesus in person. For this reason we are honored to have John share his experiences and wisdom with us. He is the one who knew Jesus personally. In his Gospel, he shares that life-changing experience with us. John's experience with Jesus may change our lives too.