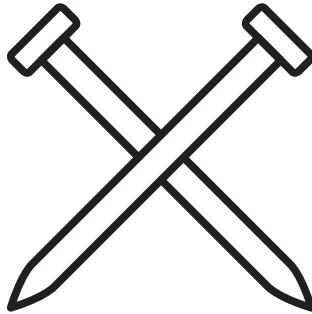
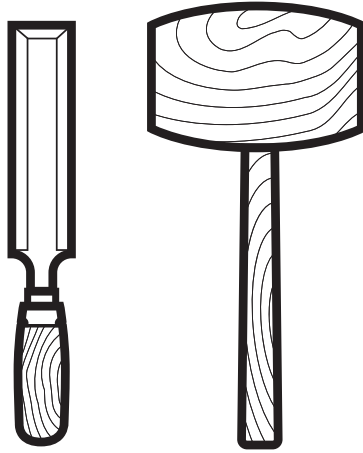


# Rebecca Manley Pippert



Seven Encounters With Jesus  
From the Gospel of John

Read Becky's comments on each  
of the questions in this guide at:

 [thegoodbook.com/discoveringrealguide](https://thegoodbook.com/discoveringrealguide)

Discovering the Real Jesus

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**This material was previously published as  
Looking at the Life of Jesus (Intervarsity Press, 2003)**

Published by:

The Good Book Company

[thegoodbook.com](https://thegoodbook.com) | [www.thegoodbook.co.uk](https://www.thegoodbook.co.uk)

[thegoodbook.com.au](https://thegoodbook.com.au) | [thegoodbook.co.nz](https://thegoodbook.co.nz) | [thegoodbook.co.in](https://thegoodbook.co.in)

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ISBN: 9781784980757 | Printed in India

Design by André Parker

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# INTRODUCTION

## **Discover, investigate, and examine the evidence...**

Someone once said that "the unexamined life is not worth living." Yet leading an examined life in our unexamining age is quite a challenge. The pressure and pace of life leave little time for reflection—and people are paying a steep price for it. We are left searching for something worth living for and for some way to be at peace with ourselves, to calm the inner conflicts and feelings of personal inadequacy that make us so dissatisfied with ourselves. How can we discover and live with a deeper sense of life's meaning?

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11 v 28). It is a remarkable statement made by a remarkable man. Jesus insisted that if we desire to find joy, peace and inner transformation, then he's our man. So if his claims are true, if he really is who he says he is, then according to Jesus, to miss him would be to miss life itself.

I vividly remember the first time I read the Gospel of John as an agnostic seeker. My impression of Jesus was that he was sincere and kind, wearing an otherworldly, beatific smile. Then I started reading the Bible. I was not prepared for what I discovered. Here was a man who claimed to be the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, yet he threw furniture down the front steps of the Jerusalem Temple. The religious accused him of being a drunk and a glutton, and having terrible taste in friends. He claimed to be the Son of God; yet one of the chief complaints against him was that he wasn't religious enough! This was not the kind of Jesus I had expected to encounter.

Maybe you're at the same place I was, and you've never read the Bible before. Or perhaps you vaguely remember Bible stories from your childhood but you've never looked at the life of Christ with a discerning, adult mind. Whatever your story, one thing is certain: it's impossible to make an informed decision without first knowing the facts. I wrote this guide for anyone who is genuinely seeking, who has honest questions and who wants to take a fresh look at the real Jesus.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, decorative initial 'B'.



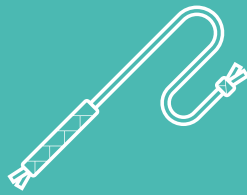
# ABOUT JOHN'S GOSPEL

Since my own journey began in skepticism, where I was encouraged to ask questions and never asked to adopt belief blindly, I have chosen a similar approach in these Bible discussions. It is not necessary that you believe in Jesus or accept the Bible as “divinely inspired” in order to use this guide. Rather, come to the accounts of Jesus as you would to any sound history, with an open mind and heart to see what you find.

This guide is based on the Gospel of John, which most scholars conclude was written by John, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. When John sat down to write his Gospel, there were already three other Gospels in existence: Matthew, Mark and Luke. The best evidence points to a composition date around AD 90, and he most likely wrote it from Ephesus, which was located in what is modern-day Turkey. Throughout the Gospel, John never mentions himself by name, instead referring to himself simply as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

John offers a fascinating perspective on the life of Jesus because he was an eyewitness to most of the events he writes about. He followed Jesus from the very beginning of his ministry, and he was one of the inner circle of Jesus’ three closest friends. When Jesus was on the cross, it was to John that he entrusted the care of his mother.

The guide includes seven stories from the life of Jesus so that you may begin to get a sense of his person, his teaching, his actions and his claims. John’s deepest desire in writing this book was “that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God” (John 20 v 31). For John was convinced, as I now am, that it is through faith in Jesus that we become fully alive and truly human.







*Profits  
or prophets?*



# JOHN 2 v 13-25

## Profits or prophets?

### *Question*

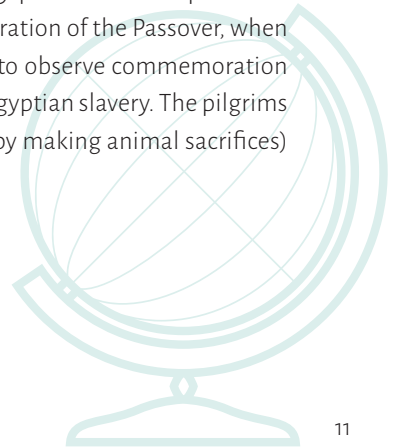
What are common complaints that people have against organized religious institutions such as the church?



### Historical context

We are about to read a story of how Jesus responded to the hypocrisy and greed of some of the religious leaders of his day. If you believe that “gentle Jesus meek and mild” is an accurate historical portrayal of Jesus, then you may be in for a surprise.

This is Jesus’ first official public appearance in Jerusalem: the religious, political, educational and cultural capital of the Jews. In our age of extreme political correctness, it is astonishing to see Jesus break every possible rule of perceived correctness. The occasion was the great annual celebration of the Passover, when all good Jews made the pilgrimage to the Holy City to observe commemoration of God’s mighty historical rescue of his people from Egyptian slavery. The pilgrims came for two primary reasons—(1) to worship God (by making animal sacrifices) and (2) to pray.



## READ SOURCE TEXT: JOHN 2 v13-25

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. <sup>15</sup> So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

<sup>18</sup> The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

<sup>20</sup> They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But the temple he had spoken of was his body. <sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

<sup>23</sup> Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.

<sup>24</sup> But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. <sup>25</sup> He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

*Note: The small numbers in the Bible passages refer to the numbers of the verses.*

- 1 Imagine the thousands of pilgrims crowding the streets and courtyards of the great temple. What can you hear? See? Smell? What is the mood of the people?
- 2 What provoked Jesus' anger?
- 3 What suggests that this wasn't an impulsive act of simply losing his temper (v 15)?

- 4 There were other people who undoubtedly saw what was happening in the temple precincts. Why was Jesus the only one who was so outraged?

What is significant about how Jesus speaks of God in verse 16?

- 5 Verse 17 is quoting Psalm 69 v 9, which is part of the Jewish Scriptures (and now in the Old Testament part of the Bible). What does this Old Testament verse reveal was motivating Jesus' passionate response?

Picture the scene: a hitherto unknown man walks into the magnificent temple precincts. In the intimidating presence of the priests of the temple, he not only turns tables upside down but directly challenges them, saying, *How dare you turn my Father's house into a market?*

- 6 Jesus was a carpenter from the backwoods town of Nazareth. Why do you think these proud religious leaders did not stop Jesus instantly when he began challenging their authority?

The temple was the center of Jewish religion, representing the very presence of the living God. There was no more powerful symbol of God's presence than the temple—it was the place where his people met with him.

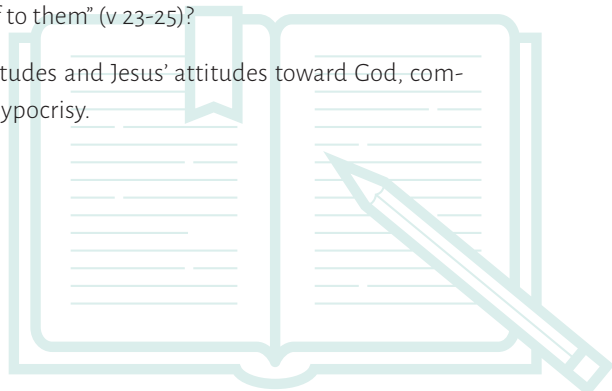
- 7 In verse 19, in response to the temple authorities' demand for credentials, Jesus draws a comparison between himself and the temple. What is he implicitly claiming about himself? Why is this hugely significant?

- 8 In what tone of voice do you suppose verse 20 was spoken?

- 9 The disciples didn't immediately grasp what Jesus was talking about when he said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." But after Jesus' death and resurrection this incident came to the minds of the disciples and it encouraged them. Why?

- 10 If people were believing in Jesus because of the miraculous signs, why didn't Jesus "entrust himself to them" (v 23-25)?

- 11 Contrast the Pharisees' attitudes and Jesus' attitudes toward God, common people and religious hypocrisy.



## *Live what you learn*

What would you say to a person who is fed up with religious hypocrisy regarding what you have learned about Jesus thus far?

*"[I was given the impression] that Jesus was a gentle creature ... [Then] I looked at the New Testament. There I found an account, not in the least of a person with his hair parted in the middle or his hands clasped in appeal, but of an extraordinary being with lips of thunder and acts of lurid decision, flinging down tables, casting out devils, passing with the wild secrecy of the wind. ... The [language] used about Christ has been, perhaps wisely, sweet and submissive. But the [language] used by Christ is quite curiously gigantesque [i.e. big]; it is full of camels leaping through needles and mountains hurled into the sea. ... He flung furniture down the front steps of the Temple and asked men how they expected to escape the damnation of Hell."*

G. K. CHESTERTON, *ORTHODOXY*

G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) was a journalist, an essayist, a humorist and one of the most brilliant defenders of the Christian faith in the twentieth century. In an age of pessimism and doubt he powerfully defended the faith in debates with such renowned figures as George Bernard Shaw. A prolific author, his most famous books are *Orthodoxy* and the Father Brown detective stories. Here we read his surprise at having first encountered the Jesus described in the Bible.

