

Dr. Robert Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 5, Purposes of the Gospel of John Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 5, Purposes of the Gospel of John, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert A. Peterson's lecture on Johannine Theology, Session 5, examines the intended purposes of the Gospel of John. The primary aim, as stated within the gospel itself, is evangelism, seeking to persuade readers to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and thus gain eternal life. Peterson also identifies a secondary purpose of edification, particularly evident in the farewell discourse and high priestly prayer, intended to build up the disciples. Finally, he proposes a minor, apologetic undertone, observed in the interactions with figures like Nathanael, Nicodemus, and the blind man, highlighting the contrast between belief and unbelief within Judaism. The lecture concludes by introducing the significance of Jesus' "I am" statements in revealing his divine identity and saving work.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 5 – Double click
icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Gospels → John).**



**Peterson_JnTheolo
gy_Session05.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 5, Purposes of the Gospel of John

Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on the Purposes of the Gospel of John

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 5 of his lectures on Johannine Theology, specifically focusing on the purposes of the Gospel of John and briefly introducing Jesus' "I am" statements. Peterson argues that while the primary purpose is evangelism, the Gospel also serves to edify believers and likely contains a minor apologetic undertone. He also introduces the "I am" sayings of Jesus, highlighting their significance in revealing His divine identity and roles.

Key Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Primary Purpose: Evangelism:

- Peterson asserts that the major purpose of John's Gospel is undoubtedly evangelism, citing John 20:30-31 as direct evidence: **"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."**
- He emphasizes the significance of belief ("believe" appearing numerous times) leading to life in Jesus' name.
- John was selective in his accounts, writing after the Synoptic Gospels and choosing seven miracles combined with relevant sermons.

2. Secondary Purpose: Edification of Believers:

- Peterson argues that the Book of Glory (chapters 13-20), particularly the farewell discourse (chapters 13-17) and the high priestly prayer (chapter 17), serve a secondary purpose of edifying the disciples, who represent the church.
- Examples of edifying themes include:
- Jesus washing the disciples' feet, teaching humble service and the need for daily forgiveness.
- The promise of the Spirit of truth and life.
- Warnings of persecution.

- The Spirit's work in the world.
- Regarding the high priestly prayer, Peterson states: "**The purpose of the high priestly prayer is not evangelism. Oh, evangelism comes out of it, but its purpose is to prepare the disciples for his leaving.**" He notes themes of the Father's and Son's glory, the disciples' sanctification and unity, and hope.

3. Minor Theme: Apologetics:

- Peterson suggests a possible minor apologetic undertone present throughout the Gospel, particularly in sections involving witnesses and interactions with various Jewish groups.
- **Nathanael (Chapter 1):** Peterson sees the description of Nathanael as "an Israelite in whom there is no deceit" (John 1:47) as a contrast to the deceitful Jewish leaders, suggesting Jesus and his followers represent the "true Israel." He highlights Philip's witness and Jesus' supernatural knowledge as contributing to this apologetic undertone.
- **Nicodemus (Chapters 3, 7, 19):** Nicodemus' journey from a sincere seeker to one who subtly defends Jesus and ultimately identifies with his crucified body is presented as a form of apologetic against the unbelieving Jewish establishment. Peterson notes his final act as "**a judgment on them and their estimation of Jesus.**"
- **The Blind Man (Chapter 9):** This episode is considered the most prevalent example of the apologetic motif. The blind man's bold and logical defense of Jesus against the Jewish leaders, based on his own experience and "homegrown theology," serves as evidential apologetics. Peterson highlights the man's statement: "**Never since the world began has it been heard that someone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing**" (John 9:32-33).

4. Introduction to Jesus' "I am" Sayings:

- Peterson introduces a key characteristic of John's Gospel: Jesus' "I am" statements followed by a predicate nominative (e.g., "I am the bread of life").
- He contrasts this with Old Testament prophets who said, "Thus says the Lord," emphasizing Jesus' direct claim to divine identity.
- He notes that while there are seven different "I am" sayings, they can be summarized into three main meanings, encapsulated in John 14:6: "**Jesus said to**

him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

- The three summarized meanings are:
- **The Way (Savior):** The exclusive path to the Father.
- **The Truth (Revealer):** The incarnation of truth and the one who reveals God.
- **The Life (Life-giver):** The source and bestower of eternal life.
- Peterson lists the seven "I am" sayings: Bread of Life (John 6), Light of the World (John 8, developed in 9), Gate (John 10), Good Shepherd (John 10), Way, Truth, and Life (John 14), True Vine (John 15), and Resurrection and the Life (John 11). He indicates that five of the seven emphasize Jesus as the giver of eternal life.

Quotes for Emphasis:

- **Evangelism:** "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)
- **High Priestly Prayer Purpose:** "The purpose of the high priestly prayer is not evangelism. Oh, evangelism comes out of it, but its purpose is to prepare the disciples for his leaving."
- **Nathanael:** "Behold, an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." (John 1:47)
- **Blind Man's Apologetic:** "Never since the world began has it been heard that someone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." (John 9:32-33)
- **"I am" Summary:** "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson provides a structured understanding of the purposes behind the Gospel of John. While evangelism stands as the clear primary objective, he persuasively argues for a significant secondary purpose of edifying believers, particularly through Jesus' farewell discourse and high priestly prayer. Additionally, he identifies a likely minor apologetic theme woven throughout the narrative, especially evident in the interactions of key individuals like Nathanael, Nicodemus, and the blind man. Finally, he introduces the crucial "I am" sayings of Jesus, setting the stage for further exploration of their theological significance in the subsequent lecture.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 5, Purposes of the Gospel of John

Study Guide: Purposes and "I Am" Sayings in the Gospel of John

Quiz

1. According to John 20:30-31, what is the primary purpose for which the Gospel of John was written?
2. Beyond evangelism, what other significant purpose does Peterson identify, particularly in the later chapters of John's Gospel (chapters 13-17)? What are some examples of themes that support this secondary purpose?
3. What is the significance of the story of doubting Thomas in relation to the purpose statement of John's Gospel?
4. Peterson suggests a minor theme of apologetics in John. Provide two examples from the text where this apologetic undertone might be present and explain why.
5. How does the portrayal of Nicodemus throughout John's Gospel potentially serve an apologetic purpose, even if it's a minor one?
6. Describe the encounter between Jesus and the man born blind in chapter 9. How does this narrative illustrate a potential apologetic aim of the Gospel?
7. What is the structure of the "I am" sayings as identified by Peterson, and how do they differ from the pronouncements of Old Testament prophets?
8. According to John 14:6, what three essential aspects of Jesus' identity are summarized in the statement "I am the way, the truth, and the life"?
9. How does the "I am" saying "I am the life" (or related sayings) relate to one of John's major Christological themes? Explain briefly.
10. How many "I am" sayings (with a predicate nominative) does Peterson identify in the Gospel of John, and what are a few examples?

Answer Key to Quiz

1. The primary purpose of the Gospel of John, as stated in John 20:30-31, is that readers may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they may have life in his name. This indicates a clear evangelistic intention to persuade people to faith in Jesus.

2. Beyond evangelism, Peterson identifies the secondary purpose of edification, particularly for the disciples who represent the church, found in chapters 13-17 (the farewell discourse and high priestly prayer). Examples of themes supporting this include Jesus washing their feet (teaching humble service and forgiveness), promising the Holy Spirit, and warning them of persecution.
3. The story of doubting Thomas highlights Jesus' graciousness towards those who struggle with belief, even requiring physical proof. Ultimately, Jesus' statement in response, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed," reinforces the purpose of the Gospel to inspire belief based on the written accounts.
4. Two examples of a potential apologetic undertone include:
 - Jesus' description of Nathanael as "an Israelite in whom there is no deceit," contrasting him with the deceitful Jewish leaders. This suggests Jesus represents the true Israel.
 - The narrative of the blind man in chapter 9, where his logical and bold defense of Jesus based on the miraculous healing challenges the disbelief and authority of the Jewish leaders.
1. Nicodemus, a Pharisee and teacher of Israel, initially comes to Jesus secretly but later defends Jesus' right to a fair hearing and ultimately identifies with his crucified body. This gradual progression and his eventual public identification serve as a contrast to the outright rejection by other Jewish leaders, potentially appealing to other questioning Jews.
2. Jesus heals a man born blind, an unprecedented miracle that becomes a point of contention with the Jewish leaders. The healed man's persistent and logical defense of Jesus based on the evident sign, despite the leaders' threats and disbelief, serves as a powerful argument for Jesus' divine origin and work.
3. The "I am" sayings, as defined by Peterson, follow the pattern "I am the..." followed by a predicate nominative (e.g., bread of life, light of the world). This contrasts with Old Testament prophets who typically prefaced their statements with "Thus says the Lord," indicating Jesus speaks with divine authority in his own name.
4. According to John 14:6, the statement "I am the way, the truth, and the life" summarizes three essential aspects of Jesus' identity: he is the exclusive means of

access to the Father (the way), he is the embodiment and revealer of divine reality (the truth), and he is the source and giver of eternal existence (the life).

5. The "I am" saying "I am the life" (and related sayings like "I am the bread of life" and "I am the resurrection and the life") directly relates to John's major Christological theme of Jesus as the life-giver. He is presented as the one who bestows eternal life upon those who believe in him, highlighting his divine power and saving work.
6. Peterson identifies seven "I am" sayings with a predicate nominative in the Gospel of John. Examples include: "I am the bread of life" (John 6), "I am the light of the world" (John 8 & 9), "I am the gate" (John 10), "I am the good shepherd" (John 10), "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14), "I am the true vine" (John 15), and "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11).

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the relative importance of evangelism and edification as purposes of the Gospel of John, according to Peterson's analysis. How does the structure of the Gospel support these dual aims?
2. Explore the concept of a minor apologetic purpose in the Gospel of John, as suggested by Peterson. Analyze the examples of Nathanael, Nicodemus, and the blind man in chapter 9 to evaluate the strength of this argument.
3. Analyze the significance of the "I am" sayings in the Gospel of John. How do these pronouncements reveal Jesus' identity and his relationship to God and humanity?
4. Examine the connection between the signs (miracles) performed by Jesus in the Gospel of John and the stated purposes of the book, particularly evangelism and the eliciting of belief.
5. Consider the audience of the Gospel of John, as discussed by Peterson. How does the intended audience (both initially and perhaps a broader readership) influence the content and the emphasis on different purposes within the narrative?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Evangelism:** The proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ with the aim of converting people to faith.
- **Edification:** The spiritual building up or strengthening of believers, often through teaching and encouragement.
- **Apologetics:** The reasoned defense of the Christian faith against objections and criticisms.
- **Christology:** The branch of Christian theology concerned with the person, nature, and role of Jesus Christ.
- **Messiah:** The promised deliverer of the Jewish people, a concept fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- **Sign (in John's Gospel):** A miraculous act performed by Jesus, intended to point to his divine identity and inspire belief. John selects specific miracles to illustrate key aspects of Jesus' person and mission.
- **Prologue (of John's Gospel):** The introductory section of John 1:1-18, which presents key theological themes and introduces Jesus as the Word (Logos) made flesh.
- **Book of Signs:** The first major section of John's Gospel (roughly chapters 1-12), which recounts seven of Jesus' miraculous signs.
- **Book of Glory:** The second major section of John's Gospel (chapters 13-20), which focuses on Jesus' final hours, crucifixion, resurrection, and appearances to his disciples.
- **Farewell Discourse:** Jesus' extended teaching to his disciples in the Upper Room (John 13-16) before his crucifixion, focusing on themes of love, the Holy Spirit, and persecution.
- **High Priestly Prayer:** Jesus' prayer in John 17, where he prays for himself, his disciples, and all future believers, emphasizing unity and sanctification.
- **Predicate Nominative:** A word or group of words that follows a linking verb (like "is," "am," "are") and renames or identifies the subject. In the "I am" sayings, the phrase following "I am" functions as a predicate nominative.

- **Logos:** A Greek term meaning "word," "reason," or "principle." In John's Gospel, it refers to the pre-existent divine Word through whom God created the universe and who became incarnate in Jesus Christ.
- **Paraclete:** A Greek term used in John's Gospel to refer to the Holy Spirit, understood as a helper, comforter, advocate, and counselor sent by Jesus.
- **Sanhedrin:** The supreme council of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus.
- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a similar structure and content and offer a parallel account of Jesus' life and ministry.
- **Eschatology:** The branch of theology concerned with the end times, including the second coming of Christ, resurrection, and final judgment.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Johannine Theology, Session 5, Purposes of the Gospel of John, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Gospel of John

1. What is the primary purpose of the Gospel of John according to the text? The major purpose of the Gospel of John is evangelism. The author explicitly states in John 20:30-31 that these signs are written so that the audience may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they may have life in his name. This indicates a clear intention to persuade readers to faith in Jesus.

2. Does the Gospel of John have secondary purposes in addition to evangelism? Yes, the text suggests a secondary purpose, particularly evident in the Book of Glory (chapters 13-20), specifically the farewell discourse (chapters 13-17) and the high priestly prayer (chapter 17). This secondary purpose is the edification or building up of the disciples, who represent the church. Themes such as humble service, the necessity of daily forgiveness, the promise of the Holy Spirit, warnings of persecution, and the Spirit's work in the world are geared towards their spiritual growth and preparation for ministry.

3. Is there evidence of an apologetic purpose within the Gospel of John? The speaker suggests a minor or undertone of apologetics present in the Gospel. This is seen in the contrasting portrayal of figures like Nathanael, described as an Israelite without deceit, against the deceitful Jewish leaders. The encounters with Nicodemus, who progresses from a questioning seeker to someone who defends Jesus and identifies with his crucified body, also serve this purpose by highlighting a different response to Jesus within the Jewish establishment. The most prominent example is the healing of the man born blind in chapter 9, where the man's bold and logical defense of Jesus against the Jewish leaders functions as an evidential apologetic.

4. What is the significance of the "I am" sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John? The "I am" sayings of Jesus are significant because they represent Jesus speaking for God, not merely as a human prophet saying "thus says the Lord," but as the divine Son of God. These statements take Old Testament figures and concepts and apply them directly to Jesus, positioning him in the place of God. They reveal different facets of his identity and role, summarized in John 14:6 as the way (Savior), the truth (Revealer), and the life (Life-giver). These sayings collectively emphasize Jesus' divine nature and his unique relationship with the Father.

5. How do the signs performed by Jesus contribute to the purposes of the Gospel of John? The signs, particularly the seven chosen for the "Book of Signs" (roughly chapters 2-12), serve as powerful evidence intended to elicit belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. As highlighted in the primary purpose of evangelism, these miracles are not just displays of power but are selectively presented to point to Jesus' identity and authority, encouraging readers to faith and the reception of eternal life. The reaction to these signs, as seen in the story of Lazarus and the Jewish leaders' response, also underscores the apologetic theme by demonstrating the conflict between belief and unbelief in the face of compelling evidence.

6. What is the role of belief or faith in the Gospel of John's purposes? Belief is central to the purposes of the Gospel of John. The primary aim of evangelism is explicitly stated as being "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). The Gospel emphasizes the importance of faith in receiving eternal life and highlights the contrast between those who believe based on seeing and those who believe without seeing, as seen in Jesus' words to Thomas: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

7. How does the Gospel of John address different audiences or groups? The speaker suggests that the Gospel of John addresses different audiences throughout its structure. The "Book of Signs" is seen as primarily directed towards the Jewish world and the world at large, aiming to present evidence for belief in Jesus. In contrast, the "Book of Glory," especially the farewell discourse and high priestly prayer, is primarily focused on the disciples, who represent the church, with the purpose of edification and preparation for their future role. While the message has implications for all, these sections have a more direct and specific focus.

8. What is the significance of figures like Nicodemus and the man born blind in understanding the Gospel of John's purposes? Figures like Nicodemus and the man born blind serve to illustrate the different responses to Jesus and contribute to the apologetic undertone of the Gospel. Nicodemus represents a member of the Jewish leadership who, despite initial skepticism and misunderstanding, becomes increasingly sympathetic to Jesus and ultimately identifies with his crucified body, offering a contrast to the outright rejection by other leaders. The man born blind exemplifies the power of Jesus' miraculous signs to lead to belief and a bold defense of Jesus against opposition, showcasing an "evidential apologetic" that challenges the unbelief of the Jewish authorities.