

**SLIDE: 1**

How do you summarise such a mighty Gospel ?  
How did the author bring it to a conclusion?

**SLIDE: 2**

Look with me at Chuck Swindoll's summary.

**SLIDE: 3**

He penned an epilogue, tying off important loose ends,  
and it is surprisingly pastoral:

**FIRST**, it gives us extra assurance for when we are unsettled in our faith,  
**SECOND**, it tells us that we need leaders, even if they are not perfect, and  
**THIRD**, it tells us to follow the path God has set for us and not be too nosy about other people.

**SLIDE: 4**

Some commentaries suggest, this final chapter may have been added when John the beloved disciple, was getting quite old. But there is no evidence that the gospel was ever circulated without it.

The chapter falls into three sections, vs 1-14 is a final sign to assure the wobbly disciples, vs 15-19, re-instates Peter as a leader of the church, and vs 20-25 concern John.

In the 1st section, seven of the eleven disciples have returned to the Sea of Tiberius, the Roman name for Galilee. John names 5 of them, like an eyewitness might do. Peter, decides to go fishing one night, and they all go too. Perhaps they needed income, but perhaps they were still unsettled with all that had happened. Did you pick up that despite Peter's denials, he was still the leader!

As the light of a new day dawns however, they have caught nothing - a frustrating waste of a night by any standards. But in John... remember the gospel started with the light coming into the world and the darkness not over-coming it. We saw that God was bringing in a new created order with the coming of the Word made flesh.

**SLIDE: 5**

So, on this last morning in John's gospel, as the dawn breaks, and light overcomes the darkness, Jesus is there! v1 He appears to his disciples a third time. Notice it is an act of self-revelation. After he rose, Jesus was never found by a Roman search party, or by the Jews, or even the disciples, or by the ingenuity of the crowds, for that matter. As the second person of the godhead, Jesus takes the initiative as God has always done, to make himself known.

But the disciples don't recognise him initially v 4. The first to figure it out is the beloved disciple, by the unlikely, but spectacular catch they make when they drop the net on the right-hand side - he reads this final sign! Peter believes him, and immediately swims ashore. John includes the exact number of fish caught, and he tells us another eye-witness detail about Peter tying his outer garment back on. But perhaps most noteworthy as an eyewitness detail, is the awkwardness towards Jesus, that he reports, when they all come ashore. They recognise it's Jesus, see in v 12, but they don't dare ask if it's really him! They know it is, but they want to make sure! They're struggling to take it in, that he's there! And to know how to relate to Him.

**SLIDE: 6**

Imagine knowing someone for 15 years they have a beard. You have never seen them without the beard. Then one day he shaved it off, without warning. First glance you wonder what is different. You recognised him, but he was altered in a way you've never seen before. He looks strange, even though he was not a stranger. You can now see a whole bunch of new facial expressions! His lips and chin looked different, and the shape of his face had changed! Time is needed to take it all in. Is it really Him, will our friendship be the same?

Perhaps it was a bit like that for the disciples. Jesus was altered, they needed time to take in this strange, new, alive-after-death look, with its new way of relating. They needed reassurance, and Jesus had come to them. Will things be the same in our relationship with Jesus, does He still love us? We may have responded to God's revelation of himself in Jesus, but we need reassurance at times, as we take in the full extent and implications of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Jesus was not dead anymore, but standing on the shore bathed in dawn light. The eyewitness details John gives us, challenge the sceptic as the implications do affect our understanding of science. God really has done something belonging to another created order.

**SLIDE: 7**

John wants us to believe this was a real event - and draw the conclusion that Jesus is the Son of God, and John wants us to believe in his name. That's how the book concludes in chapter 20...'Jesus did many other signs that are not recorded in this book but these are written so you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name'.

**SLIDE: 8**

Believing in Jesus' name is believing in what his name is associated with - his birth in human flesh, his sinless life, the signs recorded in John, his substitutionary death and now his resurrection. Then the promise is that we too will have eternal life, which means we too will rise from the dead.

The disciples needed assurance, and seeing Jesus right before their eyes that morning, watching him cook fish and bread on the charcoal fire (another eyewitness detail), gave them time, assured them, settled them, or they would have just gone back to fishing.

Jesus, who had washed their feet, now cooks breakfast for them. Imagine! He was in his resurrection body, but they weren't, and he serves them up a hot breakfast to strengthen their weak bodies and minds.

**SLIDE: 9**

There are many questions we might ask of this final sign. Why do the disciples obey the voice of the stranger on the shore?

Why does Jesus ask for fish when he has fish cooking already?

Does the story mean that in our own strength we will achieve nothing, but when we obey God, He will do more than we ask or think? I think there is a flavour of this, but is it the main message?

I think the main message is that for the third time, now back in their own familiar Galilean world and workplace, Jesus has revealed himself alive...it was not all in their imagination away in Jerusalem...the unusual fishing haul was proof, the charcoal fire, the breakfast they ate was proof, the conversation about to take place with Peter, was proof. And let's not forget, they'd all abandoned Jesus, Peter had denied him, but he'd come back to them, a third time, and this must mean, well, they still mattered, very much, to him. It was to assure them, settle them, and then to orient them to how they would go forward.

This account leaves us proofs too. The eyewitness details John gives us read like a real historical account. The kind of thing historians use to distinguish between a fable and an account of a real event. The disciples' failure to recognise Jesus and their awkwardness actually renders the veracity of the event more reliable. We like the disciples, can be assured by the historical, rational, nature of our faith, seen in John's account of this last sign. We matter too, very much, no matter how much we might disappoint Jesus - Jesus prayer in ch 17 tells us Jesus came for us too.

**SLIDE: 10**

The second section, verses 15-19, takes place after they've eaten breakfast. Remember Peter's bold claim that he would lay down his life for Jesus in ch 13:37? It had been made boldly, in front of the disciples, so now Jesus reinstates Peter as a leader, right in front of the disciples. Back in ch 13:36, Peter wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus says he can't, meaning, to the cross, but that he could later. So now Jesus takes Peter up on this offer, quite formally, using his full birth name - Simon, son of John, not Simon Peter, the name Jesus had given him.

'Do you love me more than these?' Jesus asks. Is Jesus asking if Peter's love for Him is greater than the other disciples' love for Him, as he seemed to claim in ch 13? Or is Jesus asking if Peter loves Jesus more than he loves his mates, or perhaps even the life of a fisherman, especially after a huge catch. It's hard to know, but Peter knew what he meant, and says, 'Yes Master, you know that I love you'. 'Feed my lambs', 'Tend my sheep', and the third time, 'Feed my sheep' is Jesus' commission.

This can only mean being an under-shepherd to Jesus himself, who you'll remember from John 10 is the Good Shepherd, the one true shepherd. Peter is being given responsibility for leadership within the church. The lambs, perhaps new believers, will need feeding, the mature sheep will need tending throughout their lives, and they'll need feeding throughout, so they do not fall away. Peter's two letters tell us how faithfully he fulfilled Jesus' commission. Let me read you from 1 Peter 5 - 'Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ...I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your care, exercising oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do, not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge but be examples to the flock...' and a lot more! The church would need leaders who love Jesus first of all, to feed and care for them - this is Jesus' succession plan.

But why is Peter saddened when Jesus asks him the third time? Twice he has told Jesus - 'Yes Master, you know that I love you'. Well of course Peter knows now that Jesus knows everything about him. Jesus had predicted his denials, so he must know the extent of his love. So perhaps his sorrow is that being asked a third time reminds him how badly he let Jesus, three denials, and he's ashamed. He has nowhere to go, but to trust in Jesus' knowledge of him...'You know everything', he says, 'you know that I love you'.

We still need leaders like this, who love Jesus, but trust Jesus to make it so. No leader will be perfect, and Peter's love of approval by the Jewish Christian's almost derailed him, and Paul had to straighten him out. Leaders of the church have to love Jesus first, before their standing among the flock, and before any other love.

Now Peter had said he would die for Jesus, and in v18 Jesus confirms that he would do so, as v19 explains. At this point Jesus seems to ask Peter to literally get up and follow him because John then follows behind them a little way.

So, having given Peter his commission to leadership in the church, verses 20-25, focuses on John, to correct a rumour that John would not die before Jesus returned. But these last verses also serve to teach Peter about responsible leadership in God's kingdom. Being reinstated to leadership did not stretch to jockeying for inside information about the beloved disciple. How easily Peter slipped into comparisons. How John would glorify God was not Peter's concern. Jesus then repeats, 'Follow me'. For leaders of the church, and members of the body too, loving Jesus and following Jesus is not to be compromised by comparisons. Jesus is to be followed and comparisons take your eyes off Jesus. He had taught them how they should lead back in ch 13 - as servants, with humility.

**SLIDE: 11**

We find ourselves at the end of the Gospel,  
leaving us reassured in our faith,  
encouraged to pray for leaders at all levels in church -  
that they humbly serve their flocks,  
reminded to re-fix our eyes on Jesus in love, and follow him,  
relieved of distracting comparisons.