

The Spine, The Hinge, and the Binding

In writing, there is a connection between the literary form (compositional techniques) and its message. In other words, the message and theology are understood through the arrangement of the form and rhetoric. We are at the hinge of the two books in John's Gospel. Chapters 1-11 are considered part of the Book of Signs, while chapters 12-21 are known as the Book of Glory, traditionally. Several overlapping verses from John 10:22 through John 12:11 serve as the "hinge," "spine," or "binding" between Signs and Glory. And, of course, we see chiasms!

The Book of Signs is composed of John's introduction to the deity of Jesus, and stories of his ministry which include miracles, or signs, as John calls them. The ultimate sign, the seventh, occurs within the hinge/spine where Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. The Book of Signs references Light and Life thirty-one times, while the Book of Glory speaks of Love eighty-two times. Conversely, Light and Life are only mentioned six times in the Book of Glory, and in the Book of Signs love is only reference six times.

From his book *New Testament Story*, David Barr depicts the action for the Book of Signs as the descent of the Word into the world¹ (1:9). Jesus' action is oriented toward the Father in the Book of Glory, a going out from the Father and a return to the father, a coming down and going up. There are various chiasms floating around, and that is good because John's Gospel is so rich and layered, there are many nuggets within this book.

The graphic on the opposite page illustrates one structure of John's Gospel. Our lessons have brought us to the middle—the spine of the book. While there are overlaps in chapter and verse, keep in mind those numbers are for reference and should not influence how we interpret the relationships between sentences. Therefore, the Gospel's spine will encompass the stories between John 10:22–John 12:11. The next two lessons will focus on Chapters 11 and 12 as a central message of John's Gospel.

The Gospel According to John

