



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

## THE STORY BEGINS • λογος

### What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 1:1-18

#### John the Apostle

Peter, James, and John were Jesus' primary disciples. They saw the transfiguration (Mk. 9:2-13) and he took them places he didn't take anyone else. He also told them things that he didn't tell anyone else. But even among them, most people agree that John was the closest one to Jesus. John even called himself "the apostle whom Jesus loved." Here are just a couple examples of John's relationship to Jesus.

(1) Consider how this scene from the last supper unfolds:

*"After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.' The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus answered, 'It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.' So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot."*

John was leaning on Jesus' chest during this meal. And Peter, knowing that Jesus would tell John what he meant, prompted John to ask Jesus who would betray him. And Jesus told him.

(2) Consider this scene from the cross:

*"... standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home."*

#### The Book of John

Jesus loves everybody. But John was his closest friend. And John's gospel is very distinct. The other gospels all describe Jesus' heritage from an earthly perspective, John, in contrast, doesn't start with his ministry, his parents, or John the Baptist. He describes Jesus' eternal pre-existence. John calls him the λογος (logos) of God.

### What's the Big Idea?

The first 18 verses of John's Gospel (often called the prologue) are not just an introduction to John's Gospel. They summarize his whole message: "The Word became flesh!" This is the greatest news the world has ever known!

### What's the Problem?

Many people don't know who Jesus is, or recognize how much they need a Savior.



### John 1:1-5

John's opening words, "In the beginning," are a reference back to Genesis 1:1. Genesis reads, "In the beginning God created the heavens and Earth." John says, "In the beginning the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Greek term translated "Word" in this passage is λογος (logos).

### λογος (logos)

Scholars have done a ton of research on that word. It's a Greek word with a number of Greek nuances but John is using it in a Hebrew way. Basically, what it means is "expression." Jesus is the expression of God to us. To use a quote from D.A. Carson, Jesus is God's ultimate self-disclosure, the Person Who is His own Son. In other words, if you want to see what God is like, just look at Jesus.

Instead of talking about Jesus' earthly heritage, John goes straight to His pre-existence. Jesus worked alongside God the Father and the Spirit to create the world. People often say that Jesus was the Agent of Creation. Hebrews 1:2 is a great parallel verse. It says that "in these last days, (God) has spoken to us through His Son, through Whom He created the world." Another great parallel is verse 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.'"

### John 1:6-18

Verses 6-18 discuss John the Baptist, the fore-runner sent to prepare the way for the Messiah (see Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3). John proclaimed that Jesus was the light of the world.

### A Fallen-Condition Focus - Verses 5 and 10-11

Look closely at verse 5. John the Apostle says that Jesus is the light of the world, but darkness has not overcome him. Look also at verses 10-11. Though Jesus made the world and came into the world, the world did not recognize him. That's the drama of the book of John. You'll see it in every study. Though Jesus is the Son of God, no-one recognizes it. No-one understands Jesus. As you lead this study you'll want to be sensitive to this theme. You'll want to share Jesus with those who haven't trusted Him, and you'll want to encourage those who have placed their trust in Jesus to continue to trust Him daily.

### Back to John 1:6-18

Jesus brings light and life to all who receive him. Be sure to answer the Bible study questions yourself before leading this study, and consider how Jesus has brought life and light to you. In verses 12-13, John says that all who receive Jesus, who "believe in his name," become children of God. Invite your group members to put their trust in Jesus. A great parallel verse for this section is 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come."

John describes Jesus' glory as being full of grace and truth. Jesus is absolutely gracious, and he fulfills the Law of truth. Sometimes people who abandon truth and fall into licentiousness (sin) call it "grace." Others abandon grace and fall into legalism and they call it "truth." Sin and legalism are perversions of grace and truth. Jesus is the real deal. He's 100% grace and 100% truth at the same time. He's just that good.

Theologians have also noted that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man at the same time. He's not part-God and part-man. He's not God sometimes and man other times. He's 100% of both, all the time. That's the incarnation. In the words of Gregory of Nazianus (4th century) "What is not assumed is not healed." Jesus, who is God's Son, became a man to redeem mankind.

## What's Our Response?

In this study you want to help your group understand that Jesus is fully God and fully man, and that he brings life and light to those who trust him.

## What Are the Questions?

John 1:1-18

### LAUNCH

What are some things you hope to get out of this bible study?

### EXPLORE

Read 1:1-5.

1. What do you think John meant when he called Jesus "the Word?"
2. In John 1:1-3, what things does John declare to be true of the Word? Why is each of these facts significant?
3. This passage includes several allusions to creation. Look up Hebrews 1:2 and 2 Corinthians 4:6. What do you see?
4. What do the symbols of life and light tell us about Jesus? How has he brought these qualities into your life?
5. Who is the "man sent from God" in verse 6? What did he come to do?
6. John contrasts Jesus' rejection by the majority with his reception by a few (verses 9-13). Have things changed today? Why or why not? What does that tell us about the condition of the human heart?
7. What does it mean to receive Jesus? What are the results of receiving Jesus (vs. 12-13)?
8. According to John 1:14-18, what aspects of God's character has Jesus revealed to us?
9. Why do we need both grace and truth? When truth is missing, what's the result? When grace is missing, what's the result?
10. Is there such a thing as too much grace or too much truth?
11. Verse 14 says, "The Word became flesh." Which of these statements accurately describes Jesus?
  - A. He is 100% God and 100% man
  - B. He is 50% God and 50% man
  - C. Sometimes he is God and sometimes he is man
12. Why is it important that Jesus is both man and God?

### APPLY

13. What has been your experience of Jesus up until now?
14. Did you learn anything new about Jesus from this study? What are some things that you love about Jesus?
15. Do you lean more toward license or legalism when you struggle with sin?
16. Was there a time in your life where you began to follow Jesus?

## What Are the Answers?

1. When John called Jesus "the Word," he used the Greek word λογος (logos). He was saying that Jesus is the full expression of God to us. He is God's Son.
2. "He was in the beginning." Jesus has existed forever. "He was with God." Jesus is God's Son. "The Word was God." Jesus and God the Father are one in essence, but distinct in person. "All things were made through him." Jesus was the Agent of Creation.
3. Consider how these verses inform John 1:1-3.
4. Encourage the group to share.
5. John the Baptist. Look up Malichi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.
6. In Jesus' day, some people received him and followed him, but most rejected him. Few people really understood who he is. Similarly, many people do not follow Jesus today.
7. Notice how the phrase "believed in his name" parallels "those who did receive him" in verse 12. To receive Jesus is to believe in his name. This is not simple intellectual understanding. It involves the heart. To believe in Jesus is to trust in Jesus.
8. Synonyms for grace include love, mercy, kindness and unmerited favor. Truth is similar to righteousness and purity.
9. The definition of licentiousness is: "lacking legal or moral restraints." Sin results when truth is ignored. But that's not our only potential problem. Another type of sin, legalism, results when grace is ignored. Legalism is an over-confidence in one's personal righteousness and a tendency to condemn others.
10. Not really. It's the absence of either one that's the problem. Jesus is 100% both.
11. Option A is the correct one. Options B and C are ancient heresies. John 1:1 speaks of Jesus' divinity. Verse 14 speaks of his humanity.
12. Jesus had to become man to redeem mankind. To quote a 4th Century theologian, "What is not assumed is not healed." See the "What do I need to know about this passage" section. Jesus is also God. And he demonstrated his divinity with his character, his teaching, his miracles, his defeat of Satan, and his resurrection from the dead.
13. Encourage the group to share
14. Encourage the group to share
15. Encourage the group to share
16. Encourage the group to share

## Memorize

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become the children of God.

John 1:12