



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.®

Personal Study Guide

Winter 2022-23 | CSB



...h
...thout
...s made.
... was the
... was the
... darkness; and
... d it not.
... from God, whose
... a witness, to bear
... that all men through
... at Light, but was sent to
... that Light.
... the true Light, which lighteth
... that cometh into the world.
... s in the world, and the world was
... him, and the world knew him not.
... e came unto his own, and his own
... ved him not.
... But as many as received him, to them
... ave he power to become the sons of God,
... even to them that believe on his name:
... 13^oWhich were born, not of blood, nor of
... the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,
... but of God.
... 14^oAnd the Word was made flesh, and
... dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory,
... the glory as of the only begotten of the
... Father,) full of grace and truth.

JOHN'S WITNESS OF CHRIST

15^oJohn bare witness of him, and cried,
... saying, This was he of whom I spake, "He
... that cometh after me is preferred before
... me: for he was before me.
... 16^oAnd of his fulness have all we received,
... and grace for grace.
... 17^oFor the law was given by Moses, but
... grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
... 18^oNo man hath seen God at any time;
... the only begotten Son, which is in the
... bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

... theme of 1:1.
... the Word stopped
... means "pitched
... an allusion to God's
... Israelites in the labor-
... ; 33:7). In the past God
... presence to His people in
... and the temple. Now God has
... ence among His people in the
... -flesh, Jesus Christ (John 1:17).
... ances to God's glory hark back to
... ges that describe the manifestation
... s presence and glory in theophanies
... earances of God), the tabernacle, or the
... mple (Exod. 33:22; Num. 14:10; Deut. 5:22).
... the Greek word *monogenes* underlying only
... begotten means "only child" (Judg. 11:34;

U N D E R S T A N D | E X P L O R E | A P P L Y

John 1-11



WHO CAN YOU TRUST?

In the old westerns, the good guys wore the white hats, while the villains dressed in black. On one hand, that kept things pretty simple. But, on the other hand, the best stories have a way of keeping us guessing. All of us have found ourselves shocked when a character we trusted turned out to be the enemy. And we've been pleasantly surprised to discover someone we despised was secretly working behind the scenes on behalf of the hero.

Unfortunately, what works well in books, in movies, or on television isn't so clear in real life. Sometimes, it's hard to know who's really on our side. We struggle to recognize people's true motives. When we guess wrong, the betrayal can cause indescribable hurt. We just want to know who we can trust.

Maybe that's why the apostle John was upfront in his Gospel. In a sense, he was simply telling the story of Jesus, just like Matthew, Mark, and Luke had done before him. But he also made it clear that the snippets of Jesus's life that he shared weren't just unfolding an interesting tale. They told readers exactly who Jesus was and what He was about.

In the first eleven chapters of his Gospel, John shared a lot of Jesus's teachings and described several of His miracles. But everything he wrote pointed in one direction. Jesus was the Son of God, come to earth. He was God in flesh, sent by the Father to pay the price for our sins. When we were at our worst, He arrived to offer living water, spiritual sight, and abundant life. Jesus is the undisputed hero of John's Gospel, and He can be trusted. If you're ready to accept His offer of salvation, here is what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

CONTENTS

FEATURES

Word Wise	6
Bible Reading Plan	7
Biblical Background	8
Sabbath Laws of the First Century	127
Coming Next Quarter	130



SESSIONS

SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF

<i>Dec. 4</i>	Session 1: In the Beginning (John 1:1-14)	10
<i>Dec. 11</i>	Session 2: Come and See (John 1:40-51)	19
<i>Dec. 18</i>	Session 3: I Will Raise (John 2:11-23)	28
<i>Dec. 25</i>	Session 4: You Will Find (Luke 2:1-15)	37
<i>Jan. 1</i>	Session 5: Everyone Who Believes* (John 3:4-18)	46
<i>Jan. 8</i>	Session 6: But Whoever Drinks (John 4:11-26)	55
<i>Jan. 15</i>	Session 7: Pick Up Your Mat (John 5:5-16)	64
<i>Jan. 22</i>	Session 8: I Am the Bread (John 6:26-40)	73
<i>Jan. 29</i>	Session 9: He Sent Me (John 7:14-29)	82
<i>Feb. 5</i>	Session 10: I Am the Light (John 8:3-18)	91
<i>Feb. 12</i>	Session 11: You Have Seen Him (John 9:24-38)	100
<i>Feb. 19</i>	Session 12: I Know My Own (John 10:7-14,25-30)	109
<i>Feb. 26</i>	Session 13: I Am the Resurrection (John 11:32-46)	118

* Evangelistic Emphasis

MEET THE WRITER

G.B. Howell, Jr. wrote this study of John 1–11. Dr. Howell graduated from Carson-Newman University (Bachelor of Religion), Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Master of Divinity; Master of Biblical Archaeology), and Oxford Graduate School (Doctor of Philosophy). He served as content editor of *Biblical Illustrator* until his retirement.

Explore the Bible: Adult Personal Study Guide CSB (ISSN 2330-9539; Item 005573495) is published quarterly by Lifeway Christian Resources, One Lifeway Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234, Ben Mandrell, President. © 2022 Lifeway Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit lifeway.com, or write Lifeway Church Resources Customer Service, One Lifeway Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234. For bulk shipments mailed quarterly to one address, email orderentry@lifeway.com, fax 615.251.5933, or write to the above address.

We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. Read Lifeway's full doctrinal guideline online at lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline. The Key Doctrine statements in this study guide are adapted from these guidelines.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2020 by Holman Bible Publishers®. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

The suggestions for pronouncing Bible names are from *That's Easy for You to Say: Your Quick Guide to Pronouncing Bible Names* by W. Murray Severance, © 1997 by Broadman & Holman Publishers. Used by permission.

Explore the Bible
Adult Personal Study Guide
Winter 2022-23
Volume 9, Number 2

Mike Livingstone
Content Editor

Dwayne McCrary
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

Ken Braddy
Director of Sunday School

Brian Daniel
Director, Adult Ministry

Send questions/comments to
Content Editor by email:
Mike.Livingstone@lifeway.com;
or by mail to
Content Editor, Explore the Bible:
Adult Personal Study Guide,
One Lifeway Plaza,
Nashville, TN 37234-0175;
or make comments on the web at
lifeway.com.

Printed in the United States
of America

FROM THE TEAM

Most of us have something we experienced we wish we could put in print. Others may have shared about that event already but did so from their perspective. What they said was correct, but we may feel a need to help people go deeper into that story or event or get a fresh look at it.

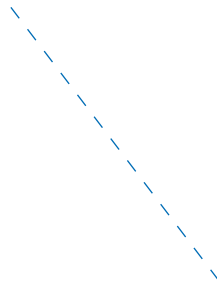
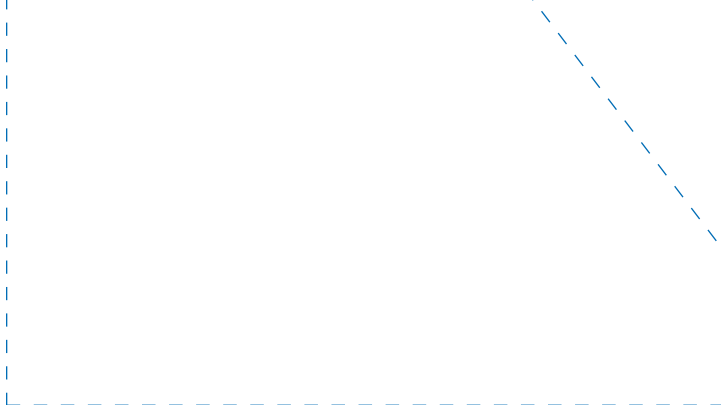
Mark recorded Peter's recollections about Jesus. Luke shared what he gleaned from interviews with eyewitnesses to the events surrounding Jesus's birth, life, death, and resurrection. Matthew, an eyewitness, shared what he knew and saw. It appears that John wrote his account after Matthew, Mark, and Luke. While the others wrote more of a chronological account, John appears to have given attention to stories that brought focus to Jesus being the revealed Christ, the promised Messiah. John even tells us there were more stories to be told (John 21:25) that he did not include. We could find some of those in the other Gospel accounts. John was writing to help his readers go deeper into the story so that they would believe in Jesus.

In the months ahead, we will be looking at the stories John included in his Gospel account. Some of these stories only appear in John's account, helping us get a deeper understanding of the identity of Jesus. Our prayer is that we will get a fresh glimpse of Jesus during this study and gain confidence that He is the promised Messiah who came to offer us abundant life.

Onward,

G. Dwayne McCrary

dwayne.mccrary@lifeway.com



WORD WISE

Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

Bethany—a town two miles southeast of Jerusalem (John 11:18); home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:1)

Bethesda [buh THEZ duh]—a pool in Jerusalem where Jesus healed a man who had been disabled for thirty-eight years (John 5:2)

Bethsaida [beth-SAY ih duh]—a fishing village on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee; hometown of Andrew, Peter, and Philip (John 1:44)

Cana—a city in Galilee near Nazareth, where Jesus changed water into wine (John 2:1), where a royal official asked Jesus to heal his son (John 4:46), and the home of Nathanael (John 21:2)

Capernaum [kuh PUHR nay uhm]—a town on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee; Jesus’s home base after John the Baptist’s imprisonment (Matt. 4:12-13)

Cephas [SEE fuhs]—Aramaic word meaning “rock,” translated *Petros* (Peter) in Greek; nickname given by Jesus to Simon (John 1:42)

Galilee—small region in northern Israel where Jesus grew up, chose His disciples, and did much of His ministry

Gerizim [GEHR uh zim]—a mountain which the Samaritans believed was the proper place of worship (John 4:20); 400 years before Christ the Samaritans had built a temple on Mount Gerizim, it was destroyed by the Jews in 128 BC.

Nathanael [nuh THAN ay uhl]—one of the twelve apostles, from Cana of Galilee; Philip announced to Nathaniel that he had found the Messiah (John 1:45); some equate Nathaniel with Bartholomew (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13)

Nazareth [NAZ uh reth]—Jesus’s hometown (Luke 2:39-40; 4:16); a small, insignificant village (John 1:45-46) located in Galilee about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea

Samaritans—Israelites of the Northern Kingdom who stayed in the land after the Assyrian exile and intermarried with Gentiles became known as the Samaritans. In the days of Jesus, the relationship between Jews and Samaritans was greatly strained (John 4:9), Jews avoided contact with Samaritans whenever possible.

BIBLE READING PLAN

DECEMBER

- 1. John 1:1-5
- 2. John 1:6-8
- 3. John 1:9-13
- 4. John 1:14-18
- 5. John 1:19-23
- 6. John 1:24-28
- 7. John 1:29-34
- 8. John 1:35-42
- 9. John 1:43-51
- 10. John 2:1-12
- 11. John 2:13-17
- 12. John 2:18-22
- 13. John 2:23-25
- 14. John 3:1-8
- 15. John 3:9-15
- 16. John 3:16-21
- 17. John 3:22-30
- 18. John 3:31-36
- 19. John 4:1-10
- 20. John 4:11-14
- 21. John 4:15-19
- 22. John 4:20-26
- 23. John 4:27-33
- 24. John 4:34-38
- 25. John 4:39-45
- 26. John 4:46-54
- 27. John 5:1-9a
- 28. John 5:9b-16
- 29. John 5:17-23
- 30. John 5:24-30
- 31. John 5:31-35

JANUARY

- 1. John 5:36-40
- 2. John 5:41-47
- 3. John 6:1-7
- 4. John 6:8-14
- 5. John 6:15-21
- 6. John 6:22-27
- 7. John 6:28-33
- 8. John 6:34-40
- 9. John 6:41-46
- 10. John 6:47-51
- 11. John 6:52-59
- 12. John 6:60-65
- 13. John 6:66-71
- 14. John 7:1-5
- 15. John 7:6-9
- 16. John 7:10-15
- 17. John 7:16-18
- 18. John 7:19-24
- 19. John 7:25-29
- 20. John 7:30-32
- 21. John 7:33-36
- 22. John 7:37-39
- 23. John 7:40-44
- 24. John 7:45-52
- 25. John 7:53-8:11
- 26. John 8:12-20
- 27. John 8:21-24
- 28. John 8:25-29
- 29. John 8:30-32
- 30. John 8:33-36
- 31. John 8:37-41

FEBRUARY

- 1. John 8:42-47
- 2. John 8:48-53
- 3. John 8:54-59
- 4. John 9:1-5
- 5. John 9:6-12
- 6. John 9:13-17
- 7. John 9:18-23
- 8. John 9:24-27
- 9. John 9:28-34
- 10. John 9:35-41
- 11. John 10:1-6
- 12. John 10:7-10
- 13. John 10:11-15
- 14. John 10:16-21
- 15. John 10:22-30
- 16. John 10:31-38
- 17. John 10:39-42
- 18. John 11:1-7
- 19. John 11:8-16
- 20. John 11:17-22
- 21. John 11:23-27
- 22. John 11:28-32
- 23. John 11:33-37
- 24. John 11:38-40
- 25. John 11:41-44
- 26. John 11:45-48
- 27. John 11:49-54
- 28. John 11:55-57

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

By the end of the first century, five Christian writings in circulation were attributed to John, who was a disciple of Jesus. One was an account of the revelation the Lord gave him while exiled on Patmos. Three were short letters addressed to early believers. The fifth is the Gospel John wrote with the intent of his readers coming to “believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing [they] may have life in his name” (John 20:31). Christian scholars generally agree John wrote his Gospel while living in Ephesus, late in the first century. This quarter we will be looking at the first half of John’s Gospel (chaps. 1–11); next quarter, we will study chapters 12–21.

John’s Gospel unfolds scenes from the life of Jesus in a way that is simple, straightforward, and yet theologically profound. Four words help highlight major themes that John developed in his Gospel.

- **Logos**—John used this term, which English translations render as “Word,” to highlight the divinity of Jesus (1:1,14). Christ’s divinity is a central topic in John’s Gospel. He explicitly referred to Jesus as “God” (1:1,18; 20:28). Affirming the divinity of Jesus, John included seven “I Am” statements Jesus made. When Jesus used this title, He was echoing the name God revealed for Himself when speaking to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:13-15).
- **Love**—John used the word *love* more than any other book in the New Testament. The first mention occurs in John 3:16, a verse that encapsulates the gospel message. The Gospel of John teaches that the Father loves the Son (3:35), the Son loves the Father (14:31), the Father loves those that love His Son (14:23), and Jesus loved His disciples and His friends (11:5; 13:1; 11:3,36; 11:5). Those who are Christ’s followers are to love one another (13:34).
- **Light**—John’s Gospel also speaks of “light” more than any other New Testament book. The book opens by explaining that Jesus, the Word, came as the light that “shines in the darkness” and is the “true light that gives light to everyone” (1:5,9). John’s Gospel contrasts light with darkness. In doing so, John contrasted good and evil (3:19-21) and explained that Jesus came as the “light of the world” (8:12; 9:5).
- **Life**—Finally, John spoke of “life” more than any other book in the New Testament and over two times more than the other three Gospels combined. John’s Gospel typically refers to “life” not in a physical sense but in a spiritual sense, meaning the abundant and eternal life that is available in Christ alone. This quarter’s study opens with the declaration that all things were created through Christ and that life is in Him (1:3-4). It closes with the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from death to life (11:1-44).

OUTLINE

I. Prelude: Christ as the Eternal Word (1:1-18)

- A. The Word (1:1)
- B. The Word and Creation (1:2-5)
- C. The Word and the World (1:6-18)

II. Presentation: Christ as the Son of God (1:19–12:50)

- A. By John the Baptizer (1:19-34)
- B. To His Disciples (1:35-51)
- C. Through Miraculous Signs (2:1–12:50)

III. Preparation: Instruction of the Twelve by the Son of God (13:1–17:26)

IV. Passion: Suffering of Christ as the Son of God (18:1–20:31)

V. Postlude: The Continuing Work of the Son of God (21:1-25)



ON THE COVER

The Door of Humility—the small entrance to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. John’s Gospel affirms that Jesus, the baby born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-7), is the eternal Son of God who took on human flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1,14). [See Session 1.]



In the Beginning

Jesus is the Son of God in human flesh.

JOHN 1:1-14

Many people think of Bethlehem as the beginning place for Jesus. The babe in a manger tugs at our hearts. But to appreciate what happened in Bethlehem, we must travel back through time eternal. Then, we may understand Jesus was God the Son—co-eternal, co-equal, and co-existent with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. The baby of Bethlehem was the eternal God who took on human flesh to save human beings.

How does knowing a person's beginnings impact how you view them?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

JOHN 1:1-18

John's Gospel is a historical narrative of Jesus's ministry. John, who wrote the Gospel, was raised with his brother James in Bethsaida on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Their mother's name was Salome. Their father, Zebedee, owned a fishing business. Simon and Andrew worked with them (Matt. 27:56; Mark 1:20; Luke 5:10). One day, while James and John were preparing the fishing nets with their father, Jesus called the two to follow Him. Some biblical scholars believe John was the youngest of the twelve apostles.

John did not begin his Gospel with the birth narrative but by declaring Jesus to be God. His prologue (John 1:1-18) contains four evidences for Jesus's deity. First, Jesus was and is eternal (vv. 1-2). While Jesus took on flesh and dwelt among us, He existed as God before time began. We cannot fully understand how God can be one God yet three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet God's Word declares it to be true. That's where John began his Gospel. He didn't try to explain it; he simply proclaimed it.

Second, Jesus is the Creator (v. 3). Genesis began with the pre-existent God who created all things. John started there as well. As the Word, Jesus not only was with God, He was God. John declared that everything came into being through Him.

Third, God sent forth a special witness—John the Baptist—to prepare the way for Jesus (vv. 6-9). The Baptizer bore witness to the Life that was the Light of humanity—a light that can never be overcome.

A fourth argument for the deity of Christ can be found in His incarnation (vv. 10-18). The Word took on human flesh and dwelt among the people for whom He would die. As one of the Twelve, John had seen Him with his eyes, touched Him, heard Him, and walked with Him for over three years. John was a firsthand witness of the incarnate God who lived among His people.

As you read through John 1:1-14, number the descriptors used for Jesus. What do these descriptors reveal about Jesus?

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

WAS THE WORD (JOHN 1:1-5)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

VERSES 1-2

In the beginning were words Jewish readers would have instantly associated with the opening words of the Book of Genesis. Jews commonly referred to books of the Bible by their first few words, thus they called Genesis, “In the beginning.”

Not until near the end of John’s Gospel do readers find out why he penned his Gospel: that people would believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him, they would gain eternal life (see 20:31). John wrote not merely to give an account of Jesus’s life and ministry. He wrote so that his readers might believe and experience life—eternal and abundant. Led by the Holy Spirit, John offered a theological retrospective of Jesus.

The opening phrase, *In the beginning was the Word*, affirms the Word’s existence from eternity past. Why did John speak of *the Word*? Jews understood that God’s Word has power. God spoke and universes came into existence (Gen. 1:3,6-7,9; Ps. 33:6). Healing came through His Word (Ps. 107:20). God’s Word accomplishes what He intends (Isa. 55:10-11).

John also answered Greek philosophical thought, which taught that the Word (in Greek, *logos*) was abstract and impersonal. Stoics believed *logos* was an unknowable principle or force that gave purpose and stability to the universe. John’s Gospel stands in opposition to this teaching.

To say *the Word was with God* affirmed the Word’s existence prior to creation. John made a final connection of the Word’s eternal existence by saying *the Word was God*. John was speaking of the Second Member of the Godhead and laying the foundation for the

existence of the Trinity. Paul likewise declared Jesus's divinity: "For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ" (Col 2:9). In verse 2, John reiterated and thus reemphasized the theme of verse 1, the eternal existence of the Word.

Why was it important for John to emphasize that Jesus existed before time?

VERSE 3-5

Having established the Word's eternal existence, John explained His activity from the beginning using a positive statement and a negative one. Positively, the Word **created** all things; negatively, nothing was created apart from Him. John's declaration again echoes Genesis 1, which states, "In the beginning God created" (v. 1). Genesis 1:1 shows God's dual nature: He is and He does. In the same way, the Word is and the Word does; He existed from the beginning and He creates. The New Testament elsewhere proclaims Jesus as the Creator (Col. 1:16-17).

In verses 3-5, John introduced words that serve as themes in his Gospel: **life**, **light**, and **darkness**. These themes represent both the promise and the problem of creation and of God's new creation. Just as God was the origin of light and life in Genesis, so John declared the Word to be the same. As Creator, Jesus is the origin and sustainer of physical light and life. As Redeemer, He is the origin and sustainer of spiritual light and life. John's declaration that life was **in him** reinforces the reality of Jesus's eternal and self-existing nature (see 5:26).

Jesus came as **light** because humans are prone to wander in **darkness**. In verse 5, John introduced the dichotomy of light and darkness, which represent good and evil. John 3:19 says, "The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil." Thus, in his Prologue, John was contrasting the darkness of fallen humanity with the glory of the Word that came as the light.

When introducing the subject of light, John included an element of hope. Since the garden of Eden, the forces of evil have tried to destroy life and obscure the light. Darkness, though, did not win or **overcome** it. As the rest of John's Gospel will show—neither did death.

**What was the significance of pointing out Jesus's role in creation?
How does that reinforce John's argument?**

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

Christ is the eternal Son of God. (See Matt. 16:16; Phil. 2:5-22.)

MADE KNOWN (JOHN 1:6-8)

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.

VERSES 6-8

John interrupted his declarations about the light to feature the one who was a messenger or **witness** of that light **whose name was John**. In establishing the background for the arrival of the Light, John the Gospel writer first introduced John the Baptizer.

John was **sent from God**. As had occurred with Abraham and Sarah in the Old Testament, John's parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, conceived when they were older (Gen. 21:1-3; Luke 1:7-25). Through Abraham, God established His covenant; with John the Baptist, God was introducing His new covenant. John's Jewish readers would have recognized the significance of the Baptizer being *sent from God*. This verb placed him on the level of Moses and the Old Testament prophets, each of whom the Lord sent with His message (Ex. 3:10-15; Isa. 6:8; Jer. 1:4-10; 25:4). Further, the Jews would have recognized that John's being sent was a fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy about sending a messenger to clear the way for the Messiah (Mal 3:1). Thus, John the Baptist's arrival and proclamation were an integral part of God's plan.

Using courtroom terminology, the Gospel explains John came to testify not about himself but about **the light**. He came to testify about who the Word was and why He came into the world. Throughout

John's Gospel, more of these witnesses step forward with the same intent. Not only did John the Baptizer have a message, he had a mission—***that all might believe through him.***

The readers of John's Gospel would have included both Jews and Gentiles. The emphasis on John the Baptist's preaching so that all might believe was good news. Regardless of one's ethnicity, socio-economic status, or age, all were (and are) invited to believe.

Using repetition, John's Gospel declared emphatically that the Baptizer was ***not the light*** himself; light and life came only through the One he would soon baptize. Like John, believers are messengers sent to tell others about the Light. Being a witness for Jesus is not complicated. We simply tell others what we have discovered about Jesus, how He brought life and light into our lives, and how He can do the same for them.

How might believers help other people believe in Jesus?

IN THE FLESH (JOHN 1:9-14)

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, ¹³ who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

VERSE 9-13

John the Gospel writer revealed truth in layers. He revealed the Word—but not by name. Similarly, he introduced John as a witness to the arrival of the Word—but told us nothing of John's ministry or work. John was setting the stage to write about the main character of his Gospel. Picking up on the theme of the Word as light, John described Him as the ***true light***. The word *true* carries the idea of

being authentic, dependable, and complete. In saying the true light **gives light to everyone**, John was not claiming that all would embrace the light. In fact, not all would. Rather, he was explaining that the light was intended for all and would be available for all to embrace.

Stating that the light **was coming into the world**, John was emphasizing some of the messianic expectations of the first-century Jews (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5; Zech. 9:9). Additionally, he was indicating that the light would be coming in a physical form. This was quite the contrast to the philosophers' teaching that the *logos* was abstract and unknowable. In physical form, the light would be personal, tangible, and knowable.

John typically used *world* not to describe the planet that spins in space but to refer to the realm where people live, with the emphasis being on the people—fallen, rebellious, and immoral people. When the Word appeared, mankind as a whole **did not recognize him**. Thus, people missed the opportunity to know Him.

John moved from the larger context of the world and zeroed in on the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who likewise, as a whole, **did not receive him**. This phrase means they did not take hold of Him. Tragically, the Creator came to His creation and they did not welcome Him.

Those **who did receive him** received something in return. They received it not as a reward; it was something he **gave**. He gave them **the right** or the authority, to be the children of God. In becoming one of His children, people experienced a change of status.

John explained to his readers how that change in status occurs: those who believed and received. Yet John was clear, this was a result of what God had done. It was not by family heritage, human action, or some religious act, but because of the will of God; “it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8b-9).

VERSE 14

Christians often speak of Jesus’s incarnation, which refers to His coming to earth in human form. The word *incarnation* comes from *incarnatus*, which is Latin for “made flesh.” Verse 14 is the clearest statement about the incarnation in the New Testament. It and verse 1 stand together like regal bookends, proclaiming that the Word was God in human form.

God's Son stepped across the threshold of eternity to dwell **among us**. The Greek word translated **dwelt** literally means "to tabernacle," to set up His residence with us. In the Old Testament, the Hebrews understood the tabernacle to be the location where God met His people (Ex. 25:8). In the same way, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us was and is the center of God's presence for His people.

John could remember when he laid aside his nets; when he saw the blind, crippled, and deaf healed; saw dead raised to life; and saw Jesus transfigured and standing beside Moses and Elijah. John could remember Jesus's **glory**, which the Father had manifest in His **one and only Son**—who came to reveal God's **grace and truth**. The imagery is reminiscent of God in His glory passing in front of Moses and revealing His love and faithfulness (Ex. 34:5-7).

The Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us, revealing God's glory, was the exact opposite of the Greek and Roman gods that were imaginary, unapproachable, and unknowable. God's only Son came to earth in human form. He invites us to follow Him and behold His glory as He works in our lives and in our midst.

How does Jesus becoming human demonstrate the glory of God?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.*

Review additional passages in John's Gospel about Christ's deity. Read John 4:26; 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; and 17:5-11. Why is it important that we understand Jesus as God the Son and not merely the Son of God? How does John consistently point to the deity of Jesus?
