

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

Discussion starter

- By what nickname have you been known? By what nickname would you *like* to be known?
If you use the discussion starter, an option is have the women write the nickname on a piece of paper when they come arrive and then put all the slips in a bowl. When you start your group time, you can draw out a nickname and see if the group can match it with the person. (Be sure not to take up too much time, however!)

questions

Read **John 1:1-18**. (Try reading these verses out loud as if you were doing an interpretive reading.)
Decide how you read the text - one person, perhaps 2 or going around the group

1. In this *Prologue*, John describes an individual by giving him different names and characteristics. In *what verse* of this prologue, does John clearly identify the person, and by *what name* does he call this person?

At first, it may be confusing as to who John is describing, but in 1:17 he identifies the person as Jesus Christ and we know for sure who John is talking about in the Prologue.

2. By what name does John call Jesus in **1:1**?

The Word

What is the purpose of "words" and why do we use them?

The purpose of words is communicate; to convey information, feelings, ideas, news.

How does the purpose of "words" fit with Jesus being called the *Word of God*? **1:18**

The Word, Jesus, came to communicate God to us. This function is so important that he is actually called the Word. Jesus makes God known to us. We can assume from his name that he will communicate with us in many different ways and that we will be able to receive and understand the communication. This was the main reason Jesus was sent to earth – to show us the Father.

- ♥ What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is the *Word of God*? What impact could this have on your relationship with Jesus?

3. List at least seven things you learn about *the Word* in **John 1:1-5**.
Your group may come up with more than seven!

1:1 – The Word existed before anything else (the beginning)

1:1 – The Word was with God

1:1 – The Word was God

1:2 – The Word is a person (He was with God in the beginning)

1:3 – Through him (the Word) all things were made (created).

1:3 – Nothing exists that wasn't created by Him

1:4 – In him (the Word) is life

1:4 – The life found in him is the light of men

1:5- The light (the Word) shines in the darkness; the darkness has not understood it or overcome the light.

4. **Little words make a big difference!** What does the word "**was**" tell us about Jesus in the phrase "in the beginning *was* the Word . . ." (1:1)

Jesus, the Word, was already in existence before the beginning; before anything was created

How can the Word (Jesus) be both "with" God and also "be" God? What do these two little words reveal about God?

"With" reveals a plural of persons. You can't be with someone unless there are at least 2 persons! However, not only is Jesus with God, he IS God! This not only confirms the deity of Christ but reveals there is ONE God, but God exists in more than one person. (Other scripture in the Bible adds to the picture so that we know that God is one, existing in 3 persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

♥ When did Jesus receive the name the *Word*? Why is that significant?

I perhaps could have phrased this question differently -- *How long has Jesus been known as the Word? or Has Jesus always been known as the Word and why is this significant?*

The idea is that even before we and our world were created, Jesus was known as the Word. He did not receive the name Word at some point in time, he always was the Word. In the beginning **was** the Word . . . (and the name Word is significant because it means that Jesus communicates God the Father to us - He shows us what God is like.)

Jesus didn't take on this role AFTER we were created, as an afterthought -- but this was his essential character even before we were created! This means that God IS communication. It is his essential character. God cannot NOT SPEAK (communicate) just as he cannot NOT Love. Love is who he is. Communication is who he is.

I find that many people think they are somehow imposing on God when they want to hear his voice or communicate with him -- like they are asking a favor to have a personal, intimate relationship with him or they somehow think it's what they need, but it's not really that important to God. Some people think they don't have the right to "make" God talk to them. We sometimes think we have to wait for the "right time" or until we hear God speak first.

Realizing that Jesus' name was always the Word, even before we came on the scene shows that speaking, communication, and showing, etc. are his essential character. We are not asking God a favor to hear his voice or to know him. We are responding to Who is really was, is and always will be! We are never imposing on Jesus when we want to have a conversation with him. The Word is who is! Of course he wants to talk to us!

♥ John deliberately uses the words, "In the beginning . . ." Compare **Genesis 1:1-5** with **John 1:1-5**. What parallels do you see between these verses? How does each expand the other's meaning?

Both passages begin with "In the beginning"

Both make clear that God existed before the beginning of anything

Genesis says God created the heavens and the earth

John says all things were created through the Word and in Genesis God creates by speaking a word -- "Let there be light and there was light", etc.

In Jesus was life and God created life in Genesis

In both passages there is light and darkness

John wants to make sure that the reader of this Gospel understands that Jesus is God; that he is eternal (existed before anything was made); and that He created all things. The Jews who read John's Gospel knew the Creation story from Genesis very well. John is purposely drawing parallels.

Jesus, The Word - Logos

John wrote his Gospel for both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles). The term Word (the Greek word *logos*) has significance for both groups. The Jews, who knew God through the Old Testament scriptures, knew that God created the world by his *Word* (Ps. 33:6), delivered his people by his *Word* (Ps. 107:19-20), accomplished his will by his *Word* (Is. 55:11) and spoke through the prophets by his *Word* (Jer. 1:4; Ezek. 1:3; Is. 38:4). John is saying that Jesus, as the *Word of God*, does all these things too.

For the Greeks, the term *logos* (word) had a definition in Greek philosophy that encompassed reason, order, and rational thought. Logos was more or less the "mind of god" that shaped, ordered and directed the universe. By calling Jesus the *Logos*, John was demonstrating that Jesus, as God, was the One who held the world together and gave it reason and purpose. Jesus is truly all things to all people!

♥ If Jesus, the *Word*, created everything and nothing exists that he didn't make (1:3), what does this imply about your existence and the living of your life? (See **Romans 11:35-36**.)

The important verse here is 11:36. Here it is in the Amplified Bible:

36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. [For all things originate with Him and come from Him; all things live through Him, and all things center in and tend to consummate and to end in Him.] To Him be glory forever! Amen (so be it).

We, as individuals, are certainly part of all things. No matter what the circumstances of my conception, God made me because he created everything and nothing exists that he didn't create. I came from God and I live through him and for him. I exist for Him. I do not and can not live for myself. We owe our very life to God.

5. What is John saying about Jesus when he calls him *life* and *light* (1:4-5, 9)? (It may help to think about the opposites of *life* and *light*.)

Life is the opposite of DEATH and light the opposite of darkness. Because Jesus is life, we live and because he is light, we can see our way to God. We also are delivered from stumbling around in the darkness.

In Jesus, God's purpose and power is made known to humans. Jesus becomes our ultimate hope against darkness and death.

Read 1:5 in the *Amplified Version*. What is the darkness that John refers to?

Darkness is sin, evil and everything that is against God and Light. It was common in John's day to see good vs. evil and light vs. darkness. John makes it clear, however, that these are not equal, opposing forces. Light is stronger than darkness and the darkness will never overpower the light.

♥ Let the words of **John 1:4-5** form a picture in your mind. Describe what you see.

6. According to 1:10-13, is everyone a child of God? Why or why not?

Every human is a "child of God" in that God created them, but John is speaking of something much more specific and spiritual here. Not everyone is a spiritual child of God. Jesus came to his own (land, people, domain, creation, things, world) and they did not receive him – give him is rightful place and recognize him for who he was. This means specifically to the Jews but also means all humans since we all belong to God because he created us. So first, John talks about rejection – those who don't and won't recognize or receive Jesus for who he is, their Creator and as we will see later, Savior from sin. BUT, to anyone who does receive him (and that still means us today), Jesus gives the right, power and authority to have a new life and become a child of God – and not just an adopted child but one that is BORN OF GOD. This speaks of a spiritual birth and we actually become part of God's family and become his children.

The one who receives Jesus receives spiritual life, the very life of God, and their spirit becomes alive. The one who chooses not to receive Jesus is spiritually dead and cannot relate to God. The difference between being a child of God and not being his child is RELATIONSHIP. The one who receives Jesus and accepts what he did for us while on earth, has all the rights and privileges of a child of the family and can relate to God as Father.

7. Read **1:12** in the *Amplified Version*. How does a person receive Jesus?

We receive and welcome into our lives and hearts by adhering to, trusting in and relying on him. This is heart belief, not head belief. This is the kind of belief that makes a difference in our lives because we believe. If a person thinks they believe, but nothing changes in their life, they have head (intellectual) belief, not heart belief.

♥ From the image of receiving someone, what would it mean to keep Jesus at the door? Only in certain rooms? Giving him the keys?

♥ How is becoming a *child of God* dependent on a person's will (**1:12**)? Dependent on God's will (**1:13**)? Born of God in 1:13 means that God initiates this birth. It is his idea and his decision. Later in the Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples, "You did not choose me; I chose you!" We love him because he first loved us. However, we have the choice to receive or reject what God offers us. God will not force a person to take him up on his offer of becoming a child of God. Yet none of us would even have the choice if God hadn't made the choice possible.

♥ What do you think are the benefits of being a "child of God". What "rights" come with this status?

8. If Jesus Christ truly is God, what amazing fact does John reveal in **1:14**?

God actually became human and lived on earth with us and as one of us. Jesus knows what it means to be human. He gets it! Even though he was human, he was also completely God. John says that he was an eyewitness of Jesus glory as God – his splendor, majesty and beauty.

What did this mean for Jesus? For us?

We definitely get the better deal! To become human, Jesus left the glory and power of heaven and came and lived with those he created. It's kind of like us becoming an ant or fish to show these creatures how much we love them. We, on the other hand, receive so much because Jesus became human and lived among us. We can have a real relationship with God and we receive the life of God (a life that never ends) and we are saved from the consequences and penalty of our sin and disobedience!

9. From what you learn in **1:14-18**, how would you describe Jesus' personality or character?

Encourage your group to share their insights and descriptions. We see that Jesus is humble and not proud and arrogant because he will willing to become human and live with us to give us life. He is also love (only love could motivate someone to do this) and he is FULL of grace the truth (unfailing love and faithfulness). It takes a very special person who can speak the truth about us and our situation, yet still be full of grace. This means he is not condemning and critical. From the fullness of his grace, we have all benefited from the rich blessings he has brought us (1:16). This means he is generous, kind and bighearted. He is also eager to show us who God really is. He is great at networking! He brings us and God the Father together.

♥ How would a person *full of grace and truth* (unfailing love and faithfulness) treat others? (**1:14**)

♥ Read **1:16-17** in the *Amplified Version*. What specific graces, spiritual blessings, favors and gifts have been "heaped" upon you because Jesus is full of grace and truth?

♥ How has Jesus made God the Father known to you? (**1:18**)

Read **John 1:19-34** – *John the Baptist*

10. What did John the Baptist see as his purpose in life? (**1:6-8, 19-26, 31, 34**)

He was sent by God to witness or tell everyone about the Light that was coming into the world. His job and purpose was to point everyone to Jesus whose ministry was coming after his. When Jesus came on the scene, it meant that John's (the Baptizer) ministry would diminish – but that was fine with John because he knew his purpose in life, who sent him and what he was to do.

♥ How sure are you of your own purpose in life? What do you see as your main mission?

We all have a God-given purpose and mission in life. Fulfilling this purpose is what brings true joy, satisfaction and significance. We are not to compare ourselves to others or try to be like others. God has made each of us special and unique. We cannot know our purpose and mission apart from knowing God. He is the only one who can tell and show us what it is. If you want to know your purpose, a good place to begin is to ASK GOD and then listen and look for his answer. If you ask, you will receive!

♥ On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the strongest agreement), how strongly can you personally agree with John the Baptist's statement in 1:34? What would it take for you to come to a stronger agreement?

♥ What picture comes to mind when you think of being baptized with water? With that image in mind, what would it mean to be baptized with the Holy Spirit (1:33)? What do you think the purpose would be for being baptized with the Holy Spirit?

Have your group share what images come to mind when they think of being baptized with water. The Greek word for baptize literally means to immerse and completely drench. To be baptized with water in this manner would mean that a person would be totally saturated with water. If we carry this meaning over, it means that Jesus will baptize (immerse and completely drench) us so that we are saturated with the Holy Spirit! As we will learn later in the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit has many functions in our life, but mainly he is our source of Power. To be saturated with the Holy Spirit (the Apostle Paul called in being FILLED with the Holy Spirit) is to be filled with his power, gifts, fruit, comfort, strength, anointing, etc. In fact, to be baptized in or with the Spirit means to be completely filled with God Himself!

11. By what new name did John the Baptist call Jesus (1:29, 36)? **Lamb of God**

According to 1:29, what was Jesus' purpose and mission in life?

He is to take away the sin of the world!

♥ How do you think Jesus would accomplish this mission? (see box below)

Lamb of God – This name for Jesus does not appear anywhere else in Scripture. As the son of a priest, John the Baptist was well aware of the importance of the sacrificial lamb offered every morning and evening as a burnt offering for sin. John could have also been thinking of the *Passover lamb* in **Exodus 12** or the lamb of **Isaiah 53**. To the Palestinian Jew, all lamb sacrifices were memorials of deliverance, forgiveness of sin, and salvation. Just as a lamb was offered on the altar for sin, so the *Lamb of God* (the Lamb that God provides) would be offered on a cross for the sin of the world.

Read **John 1:35-50** – *Jesus' First Disciples*

12. What persuaded each of the five people mentioned to become a follower or disciple of Jesus?

Disciple	Why they followed Jesus
Andrew and unnamed disciple – 1:35-39 <i>(believed to be John, the author of this Gospel)</i>	They were disciples of John the Baptist and when they heard John refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God, they began to follow Jesus.
Peter – 1:40-42	His brother Andrew told him that they had found the Messiah (the Christ, the anointed one – who all Jews were looking for). Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus changed his name to Peter (rock).
Phillip – 1:43	Jesus found Phillip and said, "Follow me".
Nathanael – 1:45-49	Phillip found Nathanael and told him they had found the one promised in the Scriptures by Moses and the prophets. He invited Nathanael to "Come and see!" Jesus convinced Nathanael that he was the Christ by telling Nathanael things about him that no one else knew.

♥ Which of the disciples' experience most closely resembles your experience is deciding to follow Jesus?

Have several share their answer

♥ With whom do you want to share the good news of Jesus' identity?

♥ How do you think Jesus would describe you if he saw you approaching (1:47)?

Under the Fig Tree (1:48) – It was customary in Jesus' day for a person to read the Scriptures under a fig tree. Because of what Jesus says to Nathanael in 1:51, it is entirely possible that Nathanael had been sitting under a fig tree reading the story of Jacob's dream in **Genesis 28:10-15**. In this dream, angels of God were ascending and descending on a stairway from heaven as a sign to Jacob that the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac would also be his God. Nathanael was fully persuaded that Jesus was the *Son of God*, the *King of Israel* because Jesus not only "saw" him under the fig tree, he also knew what Nathanael was reading and thinking. Jesus then told Nathanael that he would see greater things than Jacob's dream; he would see angels ascending and descending on Jesus, the Son of Man. (Jesus was probably speaking prophetically about himself being the bridge between heaven and earth and God and humans - **John 14:6**). No wonder Nathanael was convinced that Jesus was the Son of God!

Jesus knows who you really are along with every thought and heart's desire. How does this affect you?

Jesus let Nathanael know that he knew everything about him – what he was doing, reading and thinking. Nathanael knew that no one could know these things about him unless that person was God. It is interesting to note that Jesus, because he knew everything about each person, knew exactly what would convince them and cause them to follow him. He knows the same thing about each one of us too!

Response

John 20:31 - But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Share with your group what *words, events* or *dialogue* in **John 1** you find most convincing in supporting John's dual purpose for writing this gospel?

Encounter with Jesus

Take a few moments to be still and quiet in the presence of Jesus. Hear Jesus call you by name and ask you, "**What do you want?**", just as he asked the two disciples in **John 1:38**. Tell Jesus your hopes, desires and dreams. Tell him what is on your heart. (You may want to write your prayer on the back of this page.)

Do you hear Jesus saying anything back? Do you see him doing anything? Did he bring any Scripture to mind? Spend some time with Jesus, thanking him that it is possible to have a real encounter with him.