



LESSON 1 –GOD GIVES US HIS WORD!

John 1

DISCUSSION STARTER

- By what nickname have you been known? By what nickname would you *like* to be known?

INTRODUCTION

You may remember from the **Overview Lesson** of the Gospel of John, why John wrote his story about Jesus. In **John 20:30-31**, John states, *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 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.*

True to his purpose and without wasting time, John immediately begins building his case to show that Jesus is the Son of God. He writes a beautiful and unique **Prologue (John 1:1-18)** that starts off his story. In literature, a **Prologue** comes before the story's real action begins. Its purpose is to enlighten the reader by giving information that will be important in understanding the story.

PREPARATION

1. Before you read **John 1**, ask the **Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (John 16:13)**. You may want to make the following prayer your own:

Spirit of the Living God, the One who comforts, strengthens and encourages me.

I admit that I cannot understand the truth found in God's Word with only my mind.

I agree that spiritual truth has to be understood with my heart as well as my head.

So I ask You to give me spiritual understanding as I do this lesson.

*I pray that You would enable me to see, hear and understand,
with my spirit, all that You want to teach me.*

I ask this in the powerful Name of Jesus (as if Jesus were asking it).

Amen

2. Read **John 1** slowly and thoughtfully in your own Bible. As you read and reread, **underline or highlight** any verses, phrases or words that are meaningful to you. Put a **question mark** beside anything you don't understand. Put a ✓ beside anything you would like more information about.

You may also want to read this chapter in another translation. The Scripture handouts for these lessons contain the *Amplified Version* of the Bible. It is important, however, that you don't try to answer the questions in the lesson from just the *Amplified Version*. The questions are phrased to be answered from the *New International Version (NIV)*, the *New Living Translation (NLT)*, or something similar. Using **only** the *Amplified Version* may be confusing. It is given only as a supplementary text.

3. Write one question that you have about this chapter that you would like answered as you do this lesson.

QUESTIONS

Read **John 1:1-18**. (Try reading these verses out loud as if you were doing an interpretive reading.)

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?

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

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

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

♥ 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**.

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**)

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

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

♥ 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?

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**.)

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*.)

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

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

What did this mean for Jesus? For us?

9. From what you learn in 1:14-18, how would you describe Jesus' personality or character?
- ♥ 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)
- ♥ How sure are you of your own purpose in life? What do you see as your main mission?
 - ♥ 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?

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

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

♥ How do you think Jesus would accomplish this mission?

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>	
Peter - 1:40-42	
Phillip - 1:43	
Nathanael - 1:45-49	

- ♥ Which of the disciples' experience most closely resembles your experience in deciding to follow Jesus?
- ♥ 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, angles 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?

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.