



Week One: John 1:1-18
“The Word Became Flesh”

Study Guide for the week of
September 12, 2021

Read John 1:1-18. Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. In what ways are words different from visual images?
2. What is the relationship between the Word and God? ([1:1-2](#))
3. What is the benefit of receiving or believing in the Word? ([1:12](#))
4. How and why did the Word make His dwelling among us? ([1:14](#))
5. How does a person receive the Word?
6. What insights can you gain from seeing Jesus as God’s Word?
7. What will you do this week to better enjoy your status as a child of God?

Life Application Bible Notes

[1:1](#) What Jesus taught and what he did are tied inseparably to who he is. John shows Jesus as fully human and fully God. Although Jesus took upon himself full humanity and lived as a man, he never ceased to be the eternal God who has always existed, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the source of eternal life. This is the truth about Jesus, and the foundation of all truth. If we cannot or do not believe this basic truth, we will not have enough faith to trust our eternal destiny to him. That is why John wrote this Gospel—to build faith and confidence in Jesus Christ so that we may believe that he truly was and is the Son of God ([20:30, 31](#)).

[1:1](#) John wrote to believers everywhere, both Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles). As one of Jesus' 12 disciples, John writes with credibility and the details of an eyewitness. His book is not a biography (like the book of Luke); it is a thematic presentation of Jesus' life. Many in John's original audience had a Greek background. Greek culture encouraged worship of many mythological gods, whose supernatural characteristics were as important to Greeks as genealogies were to Jews. John shows that Jesus is not only different from but superior to these gods of mythology.

[1:1ff](#) What does John mean by "the Word"? *The Word* was a term used by theologians and philosophers, both Jews and Greeks, in many different ways. In Hebrew Scripture, *the Word* was an agent of creation ([Psalm 33:6](#)), the source of God's message to his people through the prophets ([Hosea 4:1](#)), and God's law, his standard of holiness ([Psalm 119:11](#)). In Greek philosophy, *the Word* was the principle of reason that governed the world, or the thought still in the mind, while in Hebrew thought, *the Word* was another expression for God. John's description shows clearly that he is speaking of Jesus (see especially [1:14](#))—a human being he knew and loved, but at the same time the Creator of the universe, the ultimate revelation of

God, the living picture of God's holiness, the one who "holds all creation together" ([Colossians 1:17](#)). To Jewish readers, to say this man Jesus "was God" was blasphemous. To Greek readers, "the Word became human" ([1:14](#)) was unthinkable. To John, this new understanding of the Word was the Good News of Jesus Christ.

[1:3](#) When God created, he made something from nothing. Because we are created beings, we have no basis for pride. Remember that you exist only because God made you, and you have special gifts only because God gave them to you. With God you are something valuable and unique; apart from God you are nothing, and if you try to live without him, you will be abandoning the purpose for which you were made.

[1:3-5](#) Do you ever feel that your life is too complex for God to understand? Remember, God created the entire universe, and nothing is too difficult for him. God created you; he is alive today, and his love is bigger than any problem you may face.

[1:4, 5](#) "The darkness can never extinguish it" means the darkness of evil never has and never will overcome God's light. Jesus Christ is the Creator of life, and his life brings light to humankind. In his light, we see ourselves as we really are (sinners in need of a Savior). When we follow Jesus, the true Light, we can avoid walking blindly and falling into sin. He lights the path ahead of us so we can see how to live. He removes the darkness of sin from our lives. In what ways have you allowed the light of Christ to shine into your life? Let Christ guide your life, and you'll never need to stumble in darkness.

[1:6-8](#) For more information on John the Baptist, see his Profile, below.

[1:8](#) We, like John the Baptist, are not the source of God's light; we merely reflect that light. Jesus Christ is the true Light; he helps us see our way to God and shows us how to walk along that way. But Christ has chosen to reflect his light through his followers to an unbelieving world, perhaps because unbelievers are not able to bear the full blazing glory of his light firsthand. The word *witness* indicates our role as reflectors of Christ's light. We are never to present ourselves as the light to others, but are always to point them to Christ, the Light.

[1:10, 11](#) Although Christ created the world, the people he created didn't recognize him ([1:10](#)). Even the people chosen by God to prepare the rest of the world for the Messiah rejected him ([1:11](#)), although the entire Old Testament pointed to his coming.

[1:12, 13](#) All who welcome Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives are reborn spiritually, receiving new life from God. Through faith in Christ, this new birth changes us from the inside out—rearranging our attitudes, desires, and motives. Being born makes you physically alive and places you in your parents' family ([1:13](#)). Being born of God makes you spiritually alive and puts you in God's family ([1:12](#)). Have you asked Christ to make you a new person? This fresh start in life is available to all who believe in Christ.

Profile: John The Baptist

There's no getting around it—John the Baptist was unique. He wore odd clothes and ate strange food and preached an unusual message to the Judeans who went out to the wastelands to see him.

But John did not aim at uniqueness for its own sake. Instead, he aimed at obedience. He knew he had a specific role to play in the world—announcing the coming of the Savior—and he put all his energies into this task. Luke tells us that John was in the wilderness when God's word of

direction came to him. John was ready and waiting. The angel who had announced John's birth to Zechariah had made it clear that this child was to be a Nazirite—one set apart for God's service. John remained faithful to that calling.

This wild-looking man had no power or position in the Jewish political system, but he spoke with almost irresistible authority. People were moved by his words because he spoke the truth, challenging them to turn from their sins and baptizing them as a symbol of their repentance. They responded by the hundreds. But even as people crowded to him, he pointed beyond himself, never forgetting that his main role was to announce the coming of the Savior. The words of truth that moved many to repentance goaded others to resistance and resentment. John even challenged Herod to admit his sin. Herodias, the woman Herod had married illegally, decided to get rid of this wilderness preacher. Although she was able to have him killed, she was not able to stop his message. The one John had announced was already on the move. John had accomplished his mission.

God has given each of us a purpose for living, and we can trust him to guide us. John did not have the complete Bible as we know it today, but he focused his life on the truth he knew from the available Old Testament Scriptures. Likewise, we can discover in God's Word the truths he wants us to know. And as these truths work in us, others will be drawn to him. God can use you in a way he can use no one else. Let him know your willingness to follow him today.

Strengths and accomplishments

- The God-appointed messenger to announce the arrival of Jesus
- A preacher whose theme was repentance
- A fearless confronter
- Known for his remarkable lifestyle
- Uncompromising

Lessons from his life

- God does not guarantee an easy or safe life to those who serve him
- Doing what God desires is the greatest possible life investment
- Standing for the truth is more important than life itself

Vital statistics

- Where: Judea
- Occupation: Prophet
- Relatives: Father: Zechariah. Mother: Elizabeth. Distant relative: Jesus.
- Contemporaries: Herod, Herodias

Key verse

"I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is!" ([Matthew 11:11](#)). John's story is told in all four Gospels. His coming was predicted in [Isaiah 40:3](#) and [Malachi 4:5](#); and he is mentioned in [Acts 1:5, 22; 10:37; 11:16; 13:24,25; 18:25; 19:3, 4](#).

1:14 "The Word became human." By doing so, Christ became (1) *the perfect teacher*— in Jesus' life we see how God thinks and therefore how we should think ([Philippians 2:5-11](#)); (2) *the perfect example*—as a model of what we are to become, he shows us how to live and gives us the power to live that way ([1 Peter 2:21](#)); (3) *the perfect sacrifice*— Jesus came as a sacrifice for all sins, and his death satisfied God's requirements for the removal of sin ([Colossians 1:15-23](#)).

1:14 "The Father's one and only Son" means Jesus is God's only and unique Son. The emphasis is on *unique*. Jesus is one of a kind and enjoys a relationship with God. He is unlike all believers, who are called "children of God."

1:14 When Jesus was conceived, God became a man. He was not part man and part God; he was completely human and completely divine ([Colossians 2:9](#)). Before Christ came, people could know God partially. After Christ came, people could know God fully because he became visible and tangible in Christ. Christ is the perfect expression of God in human form. The two most common errors people make about Jesus are to minimize his humanity or to minimize his divinity. Jesus is both God and man.

1:17 Law and grace (the combination of God's "unfailing love and faithfulness") are both aspects of God's nature that he uses in dealing with us. Moses emphasized God's law and justice, while Jesus Christ came to highlight God's mercy, love, faithfulness, and forgiveness. Moses could only be the giver of the law, while Christ came to fulfill the law ([Matthew 5:17](#)). The nature and will of God were revealed in the law; now the nature and will of God are revealed in Jesus Christ. Rather than coming through cold stone tablets, God's revelation now comes through a person's life. As we get to know Christ better, our understanding of God will increase.

1:18 God communicated through various people in the Old Testament, usually prophets who were told to give specific messages. But no one ever saw God. Jesus is both God and the Father's unique Son. In Christ, God revealed his nature and essence in a way that could be seen and touched. In Christ, God became a man who lived on earth.

Gospel of John Study Guide questions and notes are from