

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## JOHN'S GOSPEL (JOHN 1-11):

ONE WORD,  
ONE LIFE,  
ONE WAY

LEADER GUIDE  
FALL 2013

LifeWay | Adults

# The *ABC's* Of Salvation

Some people think a personal relationship with God is something only theologians can comprehend. Actually, God's plan of salvation is simple enough for everyone to understand. Here are the ABC's of salvation.

## *Admit*

Admit to God that you are a sinner. All persons need salvation. Each of us has a problem the Bible calls sin. Sin is a refusal to acknowledge God's authority over our lives. Everyone who does not live a life of perfect obedience to the Lord is guilty of sin. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Since none of us is perfect, all of us are sinners (Romans 3:10-18).

The result of sin is spiritual death (Romans 6:23). Spiritual death means eternal separation from God. By God's perfect standard we are guilty of sin and therefore subject to the punishment for sin, which is separation from God. Admitting that you are a sinner and separated from God is the first step of repentance, which is turning from sin and self and turning toward God.

## *Believe*

Believe in Jesus Christ as God's Son and receive Jesus' gift of forgiveness from sin. God loves each of us. God offers us salvation. Although we have done nothing to deserve His love and salvation, God wants to save us. In the death of Jesus on the cross, God provided salvation for all who would repent of their sins and believe in Jesus. "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

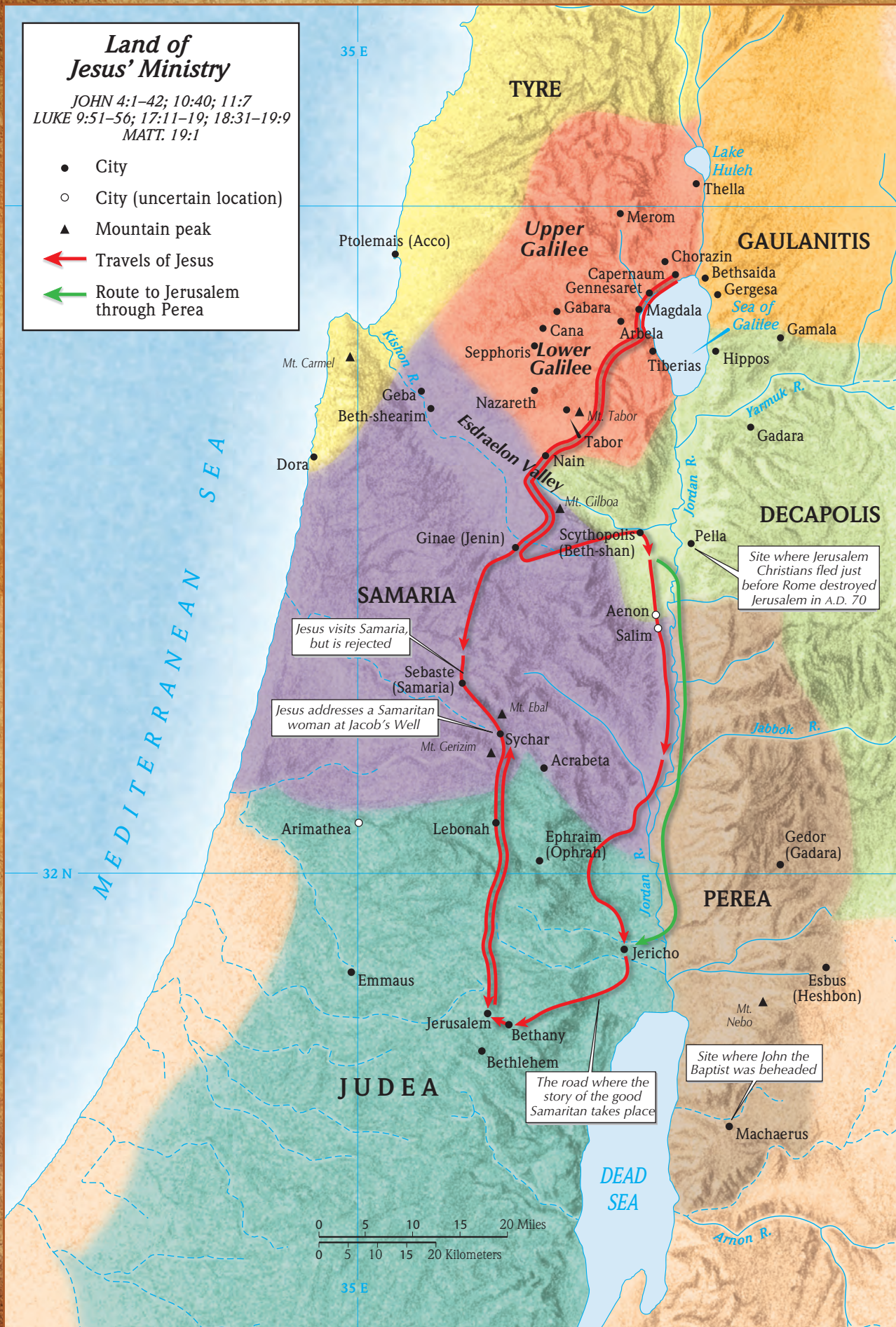
## *Confess*

Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord to others. After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, share your decision with another person. Tell your pastor or a Christian friend about your decision. Following Christ's example, ask for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith. "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

## Land of Jesus' Ministry

JOHN 4:1-42; 10:40; 11:7  
 LUKE 9:51-56; 17:11-19; 18:31-19:9  
 MATT. 19:1

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Travels of Jesus
- ← Route to Jerusalem through Perea



"Land of Jesus' Ministry" is adapted from The Holman Bible Atlas © 1998 B&H Publishing Group, page 225. Used by permission.

For God so  
**LOVED** the world,  
that he gave his  
only begotten Son,  
that WHOSOEVER believeth in him  
SHOULD NOT PERISH,  
but have everlasting  
**LIFE.**

—JOHN 3:16 (KJV)

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### ADULT LEADER GUIDE

A guide for teachers and leaders of adults  
using the Explore the Bible Series

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Linda's life verse is 1 John 3:18—"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (KJV).

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#### \* *Evangelistic Lesson*

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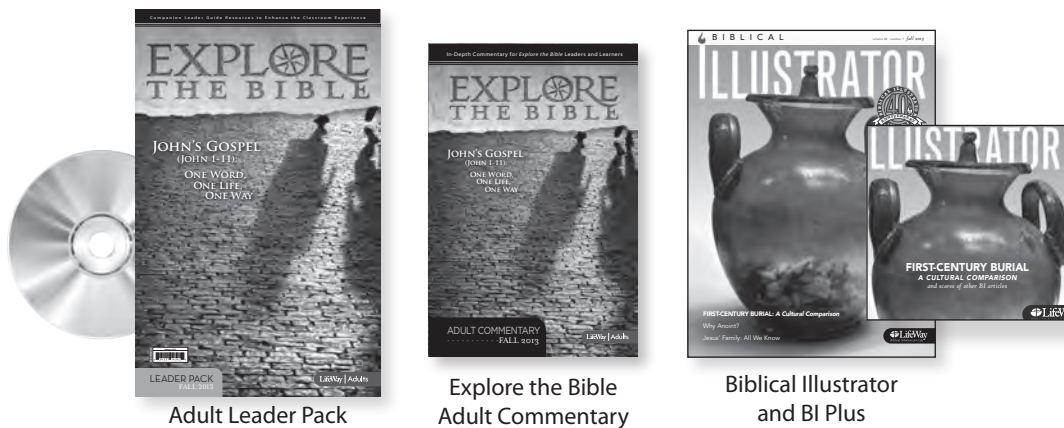
## Pronunciation help and quick definitions to enhance your Bible study experience

Terms are marked with a diamond (◆) at first appearance in Scripture and commentary. Hear audio pronunciation help at [www.mystudybible.com](http://www.mystudybible.com).

- Aramaic** [ar uh MAY ihk]—a North Semitic language related to Hebrew; by 8th century B.C. became widespread language of trade and diplomacy; examples appear in Scripture in Daniel 2:4b–7:28; Mark 5:41
- Bethesda** [buh THEZ duh]—Aramaic-Hebrew term meaning “house of mercy”; name of a pool in NT Jerusalem, located north of temple mount near the Sheep Gate
- Cana** [KAY nuh]—town name meaning “the nest”; located about 3 miles northeast of Nazareth
- Capernaum** [kuh PUHR nay uhm]—name meaning “village of Nahum”; located on northwest shore of Sea of Galilee; important economic center of NT Galilee; base of Jesus’ early ministry
- Denarius / Denarii** [dih NEHR ih uhs / dih NEHR ih igh (eye)]—unit of Roman currency in NT times; represented typical day’s wage of an ordinary laborer; translated “penny” in KJV
- Dispersion** [diss PUHR zhuhn]—term referring to a people group’s scattering, often as a result of persecution or war
- Firkin** [FUHR kin]—old English word referring to a NT unit of liquid measure; about 10 gallons
- Judea** [joo DEE uh]—name of region of Judah after the Babylonian exile; source of name “Jew”
- Lazarus** [LAZ uh ruhs]—name meaning “one whom God helps”; shortened form of “Eleazer” [el ih AY zuhr]; brother of Martha, Mary of Bethany; raised from the dead by Jesus
- Logos** [LAH gahs]—transliterated Greek term meaning “word, reason, foundational principle”; used in John’s Gospel in reference to Jesus as Deity and as Creator (John 1:1)
- Manna** [MAN uh]—Hebrew term meaning “what is it?”; edible substance God miraculously provided for the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex. 16:31)
- Messiah** [muh SIGH uh]—transliterated Hebrew term meaning “anointed one”; translated into NT Greek as “Christ”; refers ultimately to Jesus as God’s chosen Savior and atoning Sacrifice
- Messias** [muh SIGH uhs]—alternate spelling of “Messiah”; meaning “anointed one”
- Nathanael** [nuh THAN ay uhl]—name meaning “given of God”; disciple of Jesus from Cana of Galilee; may be disciple known as Bartholomew in some Gospels (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14)
- Nazareth** [NAZ uh reth]—town name meaning “branch”; Jesus’ boyhood home
- Nicodemus** [nik uh DEE muhs]—name meaning “innocent of blood”; religious leader in NT times
- Pharisees** [FEHR uh seez]—name meaning “separated ones”; largest Jewish religious party in NT times; demanded strict adherence to OT law and rabbis’ added interpretations and traditions
- Rabbi** [RAB igh (eye)]—Jewish title meaning “my master”; expert in the law in NT times
- Sadducees** [SAD joo seez]—Jewish religious party formed during time between OT and NT; name means “righteous ones”; temple authorities in Jesus’ day; did not believe in doctrines such as resurrection
- Samaria / Samaritan(s)** [suh MEHR ih uh / suh MEHR ih tuhn(z)]—NT region between Judea and Galilee; part of area of OT Northern Kingdom of Israel / inhabitants of Samaria descended from intermarriages between Israelites and transplanted foreigners (2 Kings 17:24)
- Sanhedrin** [san HEE drihn]—Jewish supreme citizen council (under Roman authority) in NT times; had 71 members, including Pharisees and priests; presided over by the high priest
- Siloam** [sigh LOH uhm]—name meaning “sent”; a pool in Jerusalem in NT times, reportedly with healing qualities; located on southwest corner of city; built in OT times (2 Kings 20:20)
- Sychar** [SIGH kahr]—village in NT Samaria near Mount Gerizim; location of “Jacob’s well”

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# PREPARING TO LEAD A GROUP

Shown here are suggested actions to take in preparing for a dynamic group time on Sundays, with target days for each task.

**NOTE:** When you prepare throughout the week, you not only manage tasks better, but you will be a more effective teacher.

## 1. Read the Bible Passages

Read to identify key words, people, places, and actions.

**Tools:** See “Read These Bible Passages.”

## 3. Focus on the Goal

Knowing your class, determine a central theme for a lesson focus and what you hope to see happen in the lives of the learners as a result of this study.

**Tools:** See *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, “Focus on This Goal.”

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday

## Evaluate & Record

Evaluate the previous Bible study experience using the questions under “Reflect and Evaluate.” Record insights you gained about members and their needs, actions to take, and general teaching observations.

## 2. Study the Lesson Passages

Define the key words, people, and places. List potential points of application.

**Tools:** *Explore the Bible (ETB) Leader Guide* (see “Commentary”), *ETB Personal Study Guide*, *ETB Adult Commentary*, *ETB QuickSource* (see “Key Words”), *ETB Discovery Study Guide* (see “Key Words”), *Biblical Illustrator*

## 4. Create a Group-Time Plan

Outline steps to introduce the lesson (why study this lesson), examine the Bible content, and move people to application. Create a plan based on the direction identified in Step 3.

**Tools:** *Explore the Bible (ETB) Leader Guide* (see “Group Time”), *ETB QuickSource*, *ETB Personal Study Guide*, *ETB Discovery Study Guide*, and *ETB Extra!* ([www.lifeway.com/extra](http://www.lifeway.com/extra))

# BIBLE STUDY EXPERIENCE:

## *A Timeline*

### 5. Gather Your Resources

Continue to refine your plan. Gather the items you need to lead the group experience.

**Tools:** *ETB Leader Pack* (Note: The pack also includes a CD-ROM with backgrounds for creating a PowerPoint and the text from the *ETB Leader Guide* for creating customized notes.)

### 6. Get there...first!

Make sure you are there in time to have the room ready to go. Greet learners as they arrive.

Friday Saturday Sunday

### Group Time

**Follow your plan,  
adjusting as you go.**

Work your plan, knowing that every class experience will take a few unexpected twists and turns.

### Weekly Tasks Beyond Lesson Preparation

- Follow-up actions (things you promised the previous week)
- Maintain Contact (building relationships with everyone on the class list)
- Ministry actions (needs you promised to meet)
- Class planning/administration (organizing, training, leading)
- Prayer Requests (praying for the requests shared by the class)
- Prospect Contacts (contacting guests and prospects)

## John's Gospel (John 1–11): One Word, One Life, One Way

**M**y grandfather on my father's side died long before I was born. I never got to meet him or get bounced as a child on his knee. Until recently I had never even seen a picture of him. But I often wondered what my dad's dad was like.

A couple of years ago, my wondering changed. A sibling discovered a photograph of Grandpa VanHorn and posted it on my Facebook® page. The photograph enabled me to connect with my grandfather in a deeper way for the first time. I could see where my father got some of his physical features and height. Finally, I had more than just a vague mental image of my grandfather. More importantly, because I now had the photograph, I could understand my father better.

When John wrote his Gospel under the Holy Spirit's guidance, he sought to provide vivid pictures of who Jesus is and what He did. John carefully selected seven miracle-signs from among the many that Jesus performed during His ministry. John also recorded several of the Lord's teaching discourses. Taken together, these sign-pictures and word-pictures enable us as believers to understand Jesus better and, conse-



quently, to understand our Heavenly Father better.

This study of chapters 1–11 in John's Gospel is grouped into three units under the theme "One Word, One Life, One Way." (This theme continues in the subsequent study of John 12–21.) Unit 1, "The Word from Eternity," is designed to help adults strengthen their understanding of Jesus. Unit 2, "The Word with Power" has a goal of helping adults respond to people's needs on the basis of Jesus' power. Unit 3 is titled "The Word for Challenging Situations" and calls on adults to display their trust in Jesus when they meet challenging situations.

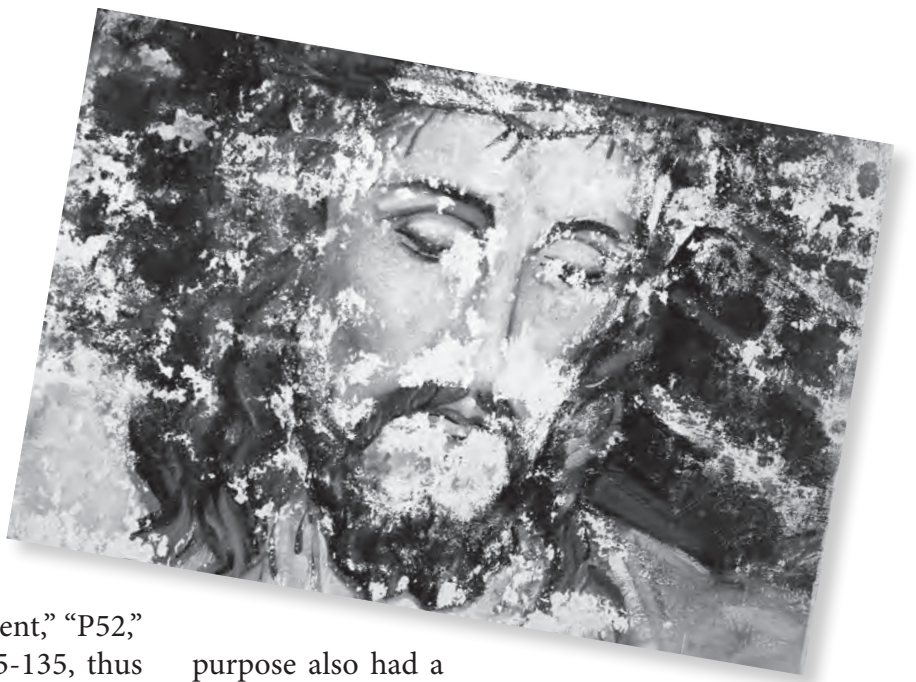
### AUTHORSHIP

The inspired human writer of the Fourth Gospel is nowhere mentioned by name in the text. Yet from the earliest centuries of the Christian church, John, the son of Zebedee and one of Jesus' earliest disciples, has been identified and accepted as the Gospel's author. Early church fathers such as Theophilus, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian accepted and advocated for John, the beloved disciple, as the author.

### DATE

Critical scholars of the Enlightenment era argued against John's authorship by positing that the Fourth Gospel was written in the

*Believing in Jesus  
is the true and only way  
to God.*



late second century A.D. However, in the mid-1930's, a Bible scholar named Roberts published an article describing a manuscript fragment containing portions of John 18:31-33,37-38. The fragment, which came to be known variously as "the Roberts Fragment," "P52," and "Papyrus 457," was dated A.D. 125-135, thus rendering impossible the proposal of a late second-century date for John's Gospel. Most conservative, evangelical scholars see no valid reason to deny the traditional authorship of the Gospel, and so they put the date of writing somewhere in the decade A.D. 85-95.

### OCCASION

Why did John write the Fourth Gospel? The traditional view is that he wrote while ministering in the city of Ephesus. Three references to being banned from the synagogue occur in John (9:22; 12:42; and 16:2). Some Bible scholars believe that Jesus experienced being banned from the synagogue on a local scale during His ministry. They further posit that John's disciples experienced such banning later on a wider scale in Ephesus in the late first century. For this primary reason—according to these scholars—John's Gospel was written to reassure believers regarding their faith in Jesus in light of the "synagogue banning".

### PURPOSE

John wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and aimed to provide a picture of Jesus that encompassed His unique status as the Son of Man and the Son of God. John explicitly stated in 20:31 that his purpose in writing was evangelistic—that is, he wanted to persuade his readers to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, God's Son. This evangelistic

purpose also had a pastoral element. He wanted to facilitate his readers' having life by believing in Jesus' name. Thus John addressed issues of eternal life: receiving new life through Jesus and abundant life now and forever.

### THEMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The Fourth Gospel features several key themes and characteristics. These features enable adults to understand Jesus better and then to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

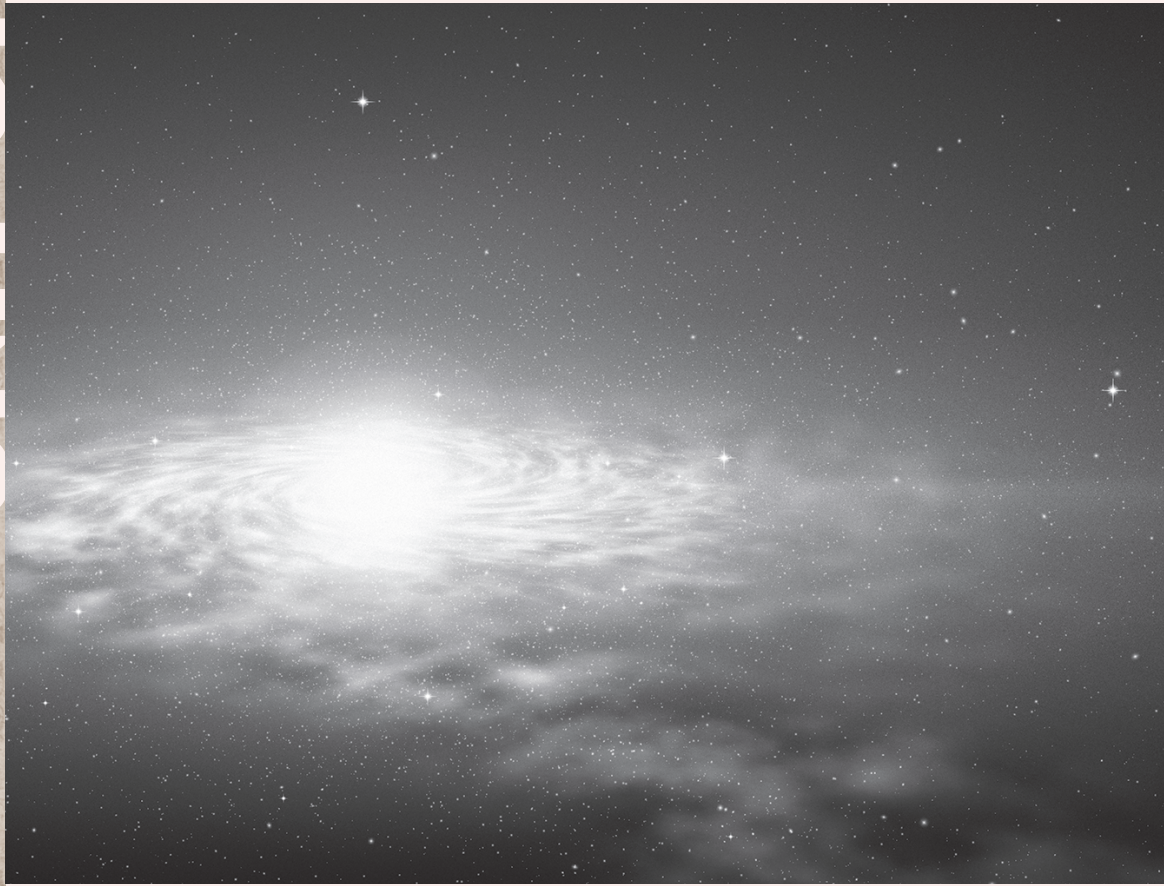
(1) *Jesus is the eternal Logos, who created the world and all that is in it.* Then He became flesh and took up residence among us in order to reveal God (see John 1:1-2,14,18).

(2) *Believing in Jesus is the true and only way to God.* For this reason, one well-known 20th century Bible scholar entitled his commentary on the Fourth Gospel *John: The Gospel of Belief*.

(3) *Jesus is the resurrected Savior, verified by the empty tomb.* Another pastor-scholar of the past century noted that the enemies of Jesus didn't visit His tomb, because they were *afraid* it was empty. In contrast, most Christians didn't revisit the tomb where Jesus was laid, because they *knew* it was empty.

(4) *The Holy Spirit empowers believers to carry out Jesus' mission.* The Holy Spirit features prominently in Jesus' farewell discourse with His disciples (see John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7).

## The Word from Eternity (John 1:1-3:36)



**T**he four lessons in this unit emphasize the eternal nature of Jesus Christ. The lesson texts are drawn from the prologue to John's Gospel (Sept. 1) and from verses that use a variety of titles related to Jesus (Sept. 8), that describe Jesus' turning water into wine and cleansing the temple (Sept. 15), and that relate Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (Sept. 22).

Your teaching goal for the unit is to lead adults to strengthen their understanding of Jesus.

*If you find it hard to believe in God, begin your search not with philosophical questions about the existence and being of God, but with Jesus of Nazareth.*

—John R. Stott (1921–2011)

## Session 1

# God Revealed

## HOW CAN I KNOW FOR SURE WHAT GOD IS LIKE?

### Leader Tip:

- Prepare for this study of John's Gospel by reading the entire book. Then reread chapters 1-11.
- Celebrate that the Word became flesh!

### Read These Bible Passages ➤

**Background Passage:** John 1:1-18

**Lesson Passages:** John 1:1-5,9-14,16-18

### Study These Lesson Passages ➤

1. **Recognize the Word** (John 1:1-5), page 15
2. **Welcome the Light** (John 1:9-14), page 16
3. **Experience the Revelation** (John 1:16-18), page 18

### Focus on This Goal ➤

**To help adults show their appreciation for who Jesus is**

### Create a Group-Time Plan ➤

**Review the teaching suggestions on pages 20-22 and summarize how you plan to...**

- Get Started:
- Get into the Word:
- Get to the Point:

### Gather Your Resources ➤

- Personal Study Guides, one per adult (+ extras for guests)
- Markerboard or tear sheet with markers; pencils, paper
- For **Get Started:** *Map: Land of Jesus' Ministry (Pack Item 1); Poster: Unit 1 (Pack Item 3)*
- For **Get Into the Word:** *Poster: John's Gospel (Pack Item 2)*

### Stay Connected ➤



**Use e-mail, text, or social media to connect during the week. Send a reminder to the group: Who is Jesus? What was His mission on earth? What about now? We'll begin the conversation Sunday as we study the Gospel of John.**

For additional help, see *Preparing to Lead a Group Bible Study Experience: A Timeline*, pages 8-9.

## Why Study This Lesson?

Some modern TV reality shows end each episode with a “big reveal.” For example, in one show about custom-made motorcycles, the “big reveal” comes when the audience gets to watch along with the customer as a previously hidden theme bike is revealed. Another show reveals the renovations made on a family’s house. Unfortunately, custom-made motorcycles and renovated houses eventually break down or deteriorate. When it comes to our lives, we need a stable and permanent “big reveal.” For this reason, Jesus came to reveal God.

Many people don’t believe in the Deity of Jesus. They may think of Him as merely a man who was an extraordinary teacher. They might rank Jesus only as an equal of leaders of other religions. Under no circumstances, however, would they say what Christians believe: that Jesus is God. Unfortunately, this statement is as far as many Christians go. They look only at its surface and stop there. They do not realize the statement has much more depth to explore. Those who seek to enrich their understanding, whether believers or not, will discover that Jesus is also the Word of God and the One who reveals God. Those who go on to dig into these terms will discover the true nature of God. Jesus is God’s “Big Reveal.”

## What Is the Lesson’s Biblical Truth?

Jesus Christ is the Word of God, is God, and is the One who reveals God.

## How Does the Lesson Fit in God’s Story?

### GENERAL BACKGROUND

- Ever since Adam and Eve sinned against God, people have suffered the relational distance between God and people caused by their sins.
- Through Moses’ law, the prophets’ visions, and the sages’ wisdom, God led His people toward a deeper understanding of Himself and how He was bridging the great gulf separating them. All of these pointed to Jesus, the God-Man.

### BACKGROUND OF JOHN’S GOSPEL

- The Gospel of John serves as a high watermark for the self-revelation of God.
- Through the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus, God is revealed.

### BACKGROUND PASSAGE (John 1:1-18)

- *Recognize the Word* (John 1:1-5)—John used the Old Testament concept of God’s dynamic Word to introduce Jesus.
- *Welcome the Light* (John 1:6-15)—The dynamic Word brings life to people as a bright light shining in the darkness. This light has the capacity to enlighten spiritually by giving light to all who believe and welcome Him into their lives. Just as John the Baptist testified of Jesus (1:6-8,15), we need to share Jesus with others today. In this way God can be revealed to and welcomed by another generation.
- *Experience the Revelation* (John 1:16-18)—God’s full grace and truth was revealed to people through Jesus Christ. We experience His revelation as we learn more about Jesus.

## KEY DOCTRINE

### ONE GOD; THREE PERSONS

There is one and only one living and true God. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being. (See also John 14:26; Heb 1:3.)



Read the article “The Gospel of John: It’s Historical Setting” in the Fall 2013 issue of *Biblical Illustrator* or *Biblical Illustrator Plus* (CD-ROM). See related archive BI articles on page 19.

# Recognize the Word (John 1:1-5)

**Verse 1.** John lived in a Greek city and culture in Ephesus, but he grew up in a Jewish background and culture in the areas of Galilee and Judea. As he sought to tell the story of Jesus in Ephesus, he was faced with the problem of how best to talk about the Lord in a meaningful way for both Jews and Gentiles. He began his Gospel with words familiar to all Jews, **In the beginning** (compare Gen. 1:1). He then employed the term **Word** (Greek: ♦*logos*), a common term in Greek circles. (See *Explore More of the Word*, “The Word,” p. 19.) For the Greeks, *logos* referred to the organizing principle of logic or reason ordering the universe. For the Jews, *Word* referred to the dynamic word of God. God spoke and things happened.

John further stated that **the Word was with God**, referring to co-existence and eternity. He then equated the Word to God. Although the name *Jesus* does not occur until John 1:17, John established from the outset of his Gospel that Jesus **was God**.

**Verse 2.** John restated for emphasis that Jesus, the Divine Word, existed eternally, before creation; He was **with God in the beginning**. John referred to the Word as a Person, not as an impersonal force. The phrase *with God* emphasizes a distinction between the Word (Jesus the Son) and God (the Father). John stated this truth in 1:1-2 because the vast majority of his Gospel focuses on Jesus in His distinct role as the One sent by the Father to point the way to the Father. Thus from the earliest years of the Christian movement, the inspired writers of Scripture affirmed the Trinity—one God, existing eternally in three Persons (see also 15:26).

**Verse 3.** Having established that Jesus was God and was with the Father in eternity, John turned his attention to creation. Jesus was God’s Agent as He created the light, the firmament, the seas and dry land, animals, and people. The phrase **all things** indicates that the full scope of creation came into existence by, or through, Jesus. To reinforce this truth, John stated it from the opposite perspective: not one thing was created apart from Jesus’ having brought it into being. Every living thing and every inanimate part of creation depends fully on Jesus for existence. This total dependence of all creatures on Jesus for life is crucial for understanding the importance of Jesus’ mission as the One sent from above to reveal God.

**?** If people are fully dependent on Jesus for their physical lives, are they not also fully dependent on Him for the spiritual lives? If so, what implications does this truth have for growth in Christian living?

**Verse 4.** Here John used the all-important term **life** for the first time in his Gospel. The Greek term (*zoe*, pronounced: ZOH ee) refers to both physical and spiritual life. John took advantage of both usages throughout his Gospel. The theme of eternal life is one of the most important themes in John, paralleling the significance in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke on the theme of the Kingdom of God (Heaven). The term *life* occurs twice in this verse and more than 40 times throughout John’s Gospel.

The reader is alerted to keep both the physical and the spiritual usages of the term *life* in mind when reading John’s Gospel. When John

## 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** Life was in Him, and that life was the light of men. **5** That light shines in the darkness, yet the darkness did not overcome it.



wrote in 1:4 that life was in Jesus, he meant physical life, tying the statement to the previous verse on creation. He also meant spiritual life, as the rest of John's Gospel will spell out for us. The spiritual sense of life seems to be in view in the statement that life was **the light** of all humanity.

**Verse 5.** The term *light*, appearing first in the previous verse and used again here in this verse, refers to Jesus. Like life, light is an important theme in John's Gospel. Jesus identified Himself as the "light of the world" (8:12). The light stands in sharp contrast to darkness and night. **Darkness** represents evil and the cover for evil deeds (see 3:19). John later pointed out that when Judas went to betray Jesus, it was at night (see 13:30).

When John spoke of the light shining in the darkness, he used the present tense, meaning the light "continually shines." Jesus the Light is shining as brightly today as when John wrote in the first century. The term *darkness* portrays that in His incarnation, Jesus came into a sin-cursed world. Although darkness always tries, it cannot overcome the light. Spiritual darkness can't comprehend the light; neither can it extinguish it.

What about us? Do we recognize Jesus is the Word of God and indeed is God? We express gratitude for who Jesus is by recognizing He is the Word of God and by seeking to better understand Him as the dynamic, life changing Word.

**?** **From *Adult Personal Study Guide*: What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is fully divine and fully human? How would you explain this truth to someone who shows interest in learning about the faith?**

## Welcome the Light (John 1:9-14)

In 1:6-8, John briefly interrupted his presentation of Jesus to introduce John the Baptist. All the New Testament Gospels introduce Jesus' ministry with a reference to the work and ministry of John the Baptist. By referring to John the Baptist as a man sent from God, (1:6), the Gospel writer sought to show him due respect and to clarify his role as a witness to Jesus the Light (1:7-8).

**Verse 9.** Jesus is the **true Light**. John used the word *true* throughout his Gospel, basing its meaning on the Hebrew concept of faithfulness and dependability. As such, Jesus is also the "true vine" (15:1) and His Father is the "true God" (17:3).

John referred to the incarnation by saying the true light was coming into **the world** (Greek, *kosmos*—as in *cosmology*, the study of the created universe). Here John used the term *world* to refer to the home of humans over against God's "home" above. At later places in his Gospel, John used the term *world* to refer to sinful people who reject Jesus.

What was the purpose of this true light coming into the realm of people? The *true light*, Jesus, provides light to everyone (see 1:4). In this context, to give light refers to giving spiritual enlightenment. Jesus is uniquely qualified to open our eyes to the reality of God. Our minds are empowered through Him to see spiritual things, notably our sin and God's love. The reference to everyone indicates the scope of God's love, but sadly not to the scope of people's acceptance of Jesus. God loves all people and sends Jesus to enlighten everyone, but not everyone believes

in Jesus. Many people reject Him. For this reason, no doctrine of universal salvation can be found here.

**Verse 10.** The term **world** appears three times in this verse to emphasize the realm where people live and to emphasize those people as the object of God's love and Jesus' mission. Jesus came into the very world He created. The transcendent God walked around as a Person who could be heard, seen, and touched (see 1 John 1:1), but the world—that is, the people Jesus created—did not recognize (literally, did not *know*) Jesus. At this point, John merely stated the fact of human failure to grasp the significance of Jesus' coming into the world. Some people failed to recognize Him because of their preconceived notions about the Messiah, which had to be overcome. Others failed to recognize Him out of sheer obstinacy.

**Verse 11.** The idea of rejection comes to the fore as John recorded the response of Jesus' own people to His mission. The term **own** appears twice in this verse, but in different genders in Greek. The first occurrence is in the neuter tense and thus refers to land, country, or creation. The second instance, however, is in the masculine tense and thus refers to the Jewish people. In effect, John was saying that Jesus came to His own lands and territories, yet even His own people did not receive Him. This simple statement foreshadowed much of what John wrote later in his Gospel. The Jewish people, in particular their leaders, rejected Jesus as the Messiah. John was describing what he observed as an eyewitness during the time of Jesus' ministry and perhaps also during the time when he wrote the Gospel.

**Verse 12.** To avoid the impression that everyone rejected Jesus, John quickly focused on those who accepted Him. The actions of receiving Jesus and believing in Jesus are virtually synonymous. To receive Jesus is to believe in His **name** and to welcome His revelation. By using a present tense participle, John referred to believing in Jesus as a continuing reality. Those who truly receive Jesus go on believing in His name.

**?** Do we mislead people by suggesting that a quick trip down the aisle and a brief dip in the baptismal waters is all they need to be saved? If so, what is a better approach?

What does believing in Jesus' name mean? In John's understanding, the concept of *name* was synonymous with character and being. To know someone's name was to know who they were, what they stood for, and where they were from. To believe in Jesus' name means to totally "buy into" what Jesus revealed in His ministry. True believers make a lifelong surrender to live according to God's Word and under the direction of His Spirit. Such a relationship results in Jesus giving us the authority, or power, to be children of God. Only God can give us the right to be His children.

**Verse 13.** This verse makes clear that salvation is **of God** alone. It is not a result of biological action. Being **born** as a child of Christian parents doesn't automatically make the child a believer. Nor is salvation a matter of fulfilling natural human desires. Finally, salvation is not a matter of the human **will**. By eliminating every human avenue for obtaining salvation, or spiritual birth, John turned the focus on God as the single Source of new life. Yet, how can sinful people find God since they are separated from Him by their sins? John answered the question in the

## John 1:9-14

**9** The true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

**10** He was in the world, and the world was created through Him, 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 blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

**14** The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

next verse by talking about how the eternal Word who was with God and was God came to live in the world of sinful people.

**Verse 14.** John reintroduced the concept of the Word, last mentioned in 1:1. The Divine Word took on **flesh**, used here with no reference to a sinful nature but rather in the simple sense of Jesus' becoming a human being. The eternal Word, who was with God and who was God, became a Person and came to live **among us**. The idea of dwelling with, or taking up residence with, renders a Greek term that literally means "to pitch a tent." The impact of John's statement in common language might be something like this: "the Word became a living, breathing Person, and He moved in next door to us."

The Living Word came near enough to view. Thus John wrote that people observed His **glory**. The term refers to the weighty honor of God as revealed in Jesus. Jesus is the unique, "one-of-a-kind" Son of the Heavenly Father. This unique Son is **full of grace and truth**. Though John does not use the word *grace* beyond 1:17, its meaning is demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus throughout the Gospel. The term *truth* is based on the Hebrew concept of faithfulness.

We welcome the light Jesus brings into the world by believing in Him. We express gratitude to Jesus by placing our faith in Him and living as His children.

**?** **From Adult Personal Study Guide:** What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is fully divine and fully human? How would you explain this truth to someone who shows interest in learning about the faith?

### John 1:16-18

**16** Indeed, we have all received grace after grace from His fullness, **17** for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God. The One and Only Son—the One who is at the Father's side—He has revealed Him.

## Experience the Revelation (John 1:16-18)

**Verse 16.** After briefly mentioning John the Baptist's witness to Jesus (1:15), John again focused on Jesus. By using the plural **we**, John might have had his initial Gospel audience in mind. Surely all Christians have received abundant **grace**. The Greek construction probably refers to a repeated pouring out of gracious acts one after the other, like the unending line of waves sweeping the seashore. These repeated acts of grace come because Jesus is *full of grace*.

**Verse 17.** Here John at last mentioned Jesus by name and title, **Jesus Christ**. However, he first mentioned **Moses**. The intent was not to belittle Moses so much as to portray him as an early wave of God's grace, being followed by the fuller wave of grace in Jesus. **The law** was given through Moses, indicating he was God's agent of the law. *The law* can refer canonically to the first five books of the Bible, figuratively to the Old Testament or any part thereof, and sometimes specifically to the Ten Commandments or other portions of the first five books. John sought to show respect for Moses as the one who delivered God's law to His people, but the law was incomplete without the **grace and truth** that came through Jesus, the Agent of the new and better covenant (see Heb. 7:22).

**Verse 18.** This verse is emphatic in Greek: "God, no one has seen, ever!" Yet, Jesus has revealed Him. Because no one has ever **seen God** or could even hope to see Him, He took the initiative to reveal Himself

through Jesus. As God's unique Son—being Deity Himself—Jesus alone reveals God the Father to us. Because the Son is in the closest relationship with the Father—being equal with God (see Phil. 2:6)—Jesus is perfectly suited and immanently qualified to reveal (literally to “exegete, explain”) the Father to the world.

**?** Does the fact that we cannot see God physically prohibit us from knowing enough about Him to experience His presence fully? (1:18)

Jesus is unique in so many ways, not the least of which is the fact He alone reveals God to us. We express gratitude for who Jesus is by exploring the revelation of God He provides.

**?** From *Adult Personal Study Guide*: What are some ways you have experienced the superabundant grace of God that Jesus gives? How can you thank Him now?

## WHAT NOW? MY MISSION

How can you lead your class to put into action this week what you've learned in God's Word about the Deity of Jesus Christ?

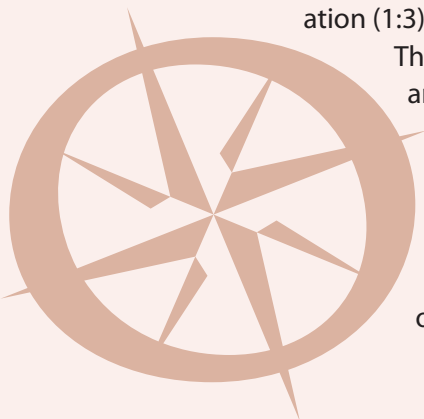
1. Express gratitude to God for the eternal, Divine Word whose name is Jesus.
2. Welcome God's light by placing or renewing your faith in Jesus.
3. Experience God's revelation by exploring the truths Jesus reveals.

## EXPLORE MORE OF THE WORD

### The Word (John 1:1,14)

The phrase “the word” (Greek, *logos*) appears often in John's Gospel. Frequently the phrase refers to a message (17:20), a report (21:23), a spoken word (12:48), or to Scripture (12:38). However, in John's prologue to his Gospel (1:1-18), “the Word” has a specialized sense, referring to a Person. The phrase occurs three times in 1:1, emphasizing the Word's eternity (was in the beginning), presence and close proximity with the Father (was with God), and full Deity (was God). This Word was the Great Architect of all creation (1:3), bringing life and light to people (1:4,9).

The good news is the Word became flesh and lived on earth (1:14). In 1:17, John identified this eternal Word as Jesus Christ. Having established the eternity, presence, and Deity of the Word, John was able to focus on the enfleshed Word, Jesus, in the remainder of his Gospel.



**B** For more background information, read the following in the Fall 2013 issue of *Biblical Illustrator Plus* (CD-ROM): “Light in John's Writings” (Su '09); “To ‘Tabernacle’” (Su '05); “The ‘Word’ in John's Gospel” (Fa '97). BI Plus is available for purchase at [www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator).



Your goal this week is to help adults specify ways to express gratitude for who Jesus is.

# GROUP TIME

## TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR MEANINGFUL GROUP TIME

### 1. Get Started

- Briefly describe the illustration of the big reveal from the introduction in the Leader Guide commentary (p. 14). **Q: Why is the reveal the highlight of the show?** Say: *God revealed Christ throughout the Scriptures. He did not precede that revelation with theatrics or a command to “Move that bus.” God wants people to know His Son, understand why He sent Him to earth, and respond by accepting Christ as His Savior.*

- Briefly overview the Gospel of John and its writer, drawing from the introductory material on pages 10-11. Point out how John’s Gospel is different in its approach from the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Emphasize the prologue (John 1:1-18) of John focuses on the Deity of Christ and encourages adults to show their appreciation for who Jesus is. Highlight *Poster: John’s Gospel (Pack Item 2)* which you have displayed on the focal wall. Emphasize that our study will span two quarters (six months). (If you don’t have the Leader Pack, see “No Leader Pack?” suggestions on p. 53.)

- Introduce today’s study from the Book of John. Say: *In this lesson from the prologue of John’s Gospel, we will explore three dimensions of Jesus’ identity: the Word of God, God, and the One who reveals God. As we grow in our understanding of Jesus’ identity, we will identify specific ways we can express gratitude for who Jesus is.*

- Call attention to the displayed *Map: Land of Jesus’ Ministry (Pack Item 1)* also located on the inside cover of the *Personal Study Guide (PSG)*. (Note: Keep this map for use during the Winter 2013-2014 study of John 12-21 as well.) Overview this first unit by posting and using the *Poster: Unit 1 (Pack Item 3)*.

### 2. Get into the Word

#### Recognize the Word—John 1:1-5

- Call on a volunteer to read aloud John 1:1-5. Highlight *Poster: John’s Gospel (Pack Item 2)*. Comment that John began by focusing on Christ as “the Word,” a term he believed would communicate well with both Jews and Gentiles. Discuss the significance of John’s referring to Christ as *the Word* rather than *a Word*. Use *Explore More of the Word*, page 19, to expand on how John used the Word in verse 1. Also see the article “The ‘Word’ in John’s Gospel” on pages 150-151 of this Leader Guide.

- **Q: Why is it important to know and understand that Christ existed from the beginning, before creation?** Encourage learners to discuss. Ask learners to turn to the first chapter of Genesis and briefly review all that was created in the first seven days. **Why is it important to understand that all creatures depend on Jesus for their existence?** Call on volunteers to describe how they experience Christ through nature.

- Call attention to the terms “light” and “life.” Define each term using material from this Leader Guide and the *Personal Study Guide (PSG)*. Emphasize the point from the Leader Guide that the light of Christ shines as brightly today as when Jesus walked on the earth. **Q: What factors about today’s world might cause you to conclude otherwise?** Emphasize from verse 5 the impossibility of the world’s darkness overcoming the light of Christ. Say: *As we recognize Jesus is the Word of God, we are better able to express gratitude for who He is.*



## Welcome the Light—John 1:9-14

- Enlist a class member to read aloud John 1:6-8. Discuss John the Baptist's role in relation to Jesus. **Q: How does John the Baptist's role compare to the role of believers today?**

- Direct learners to read silently John 1:9-14 and the commentary on these verses in PSG (pp. 16-18) in preparation for class discussion.

- **Q: What is the significance of John's description of the light of Christ as true light?** During the discussion of this question, point out that while the light of Christ is available to everyone, only those who welcome Him into their hearts become children of God.

- **Q: Why did Jesus' own people reject Him? Why do people today reject Jesus?**

Read this quote from pages 16-17 of PSG: *"The eternal Son of God miraculously entered the world He created. Because that world had fallen under the curse of sin, however, the created ones failed to recognize their Creator. This failure was more than just an inability to recognize outward features. It was a deep unwillingness to welcome and relate to Jesus as the Divine Son of God. He was rejected not only by the world at large but also by the covenant people whom God had chosen to accomplish His mission."*

- **Q: What do people receive when they accept Christ as Savior?** As needed, point out that believers receive from Christ the authority to be His children. Spiritual birth is available only from God.

- **Q: What traits of Jesus are revealed through His glory? How are these traits worthy of praise from His children?**

- Urge believers to regularly thank Jesus for salvation and the privilege of being His children. Comment that nonbelievers express gratitude for who Jesus is by placing their faith in Him and becoming His children.

## Experience the Revelation—John 1:16-18

- Call on a volunteer to read aloud John 1:16-18. Draw from the Leader Guide commentary to explain John's use of "we" in verse 16 (p. 18). **Q: What are some examples of grace you have received from Christ?** Explain the meaning of Christ's fullness as completeness.

- Say: *Verse 17 is the first time in his Gospel that John mentioned Jesus by name. John then praised Moses as the lawgiver to differentiate the law from the new covenant that came with Jesus.*

- **Q: What do people mean when they say to someone they are meeting for the first time, "I feel like I already know you"?** Apply responses to verse 18 to understand we can know God whom we have not seen because Jesus revealed Him to us. Say: *The better we get to know Christ, the more we will know of God.* Express gratitude for who Jesus is by exploring the revelation of God He alone provides.

## 3. Get to the Point

- Review the three dimensions of Jesus' identity dealt with in this lesson: the Word of God, God and the One who reveals God. **Q: How will you identify specific ways to express gratitude for who Jesus is?** Record responses on the marker-board or a tear sheet.

- Invite learners to thank God in sentence prayers for who He is in their lives.

## for further discussion

- **How does the portrait of Jesus in John's prologue differ from ways Jesus is viewed today? (John 1:1-5)**

- **How does John 1:9-14 help you understand who Jesus is to you?**

- **From the Personal Study Guide (PSG): What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is fully divine and fully human? (John 1:16-18)**

## notes:

## TEACHING OPTIONS

### ◆ GET STARTED or DEPARTMENT Idea

Display on the markerboard or a tear sheet a list of some of the words and/or names used in the Bible to

describe Jesus. These may include:

*Savior, Lord, Friend, Son of God,*

*Son of Man, Creator, Word, I*

*AM, Mighty Fortress, Light,*

*Shepherd, Jehovah, King,*

*Comforter, Peace, and*

others. As learners arrive,

invite them to add additional words to the list.

Briefly highlight several of the names from the list.

Call on two preenlisted learners

to briefly testify about who Jesus is to them.

Distribute *Baptist Hymnals* and ask learners to find Hymn 317, "There's Something About That Name." Sing or read aloud the hymn including the chorus as an introduction to today's study.

Ask learners to silently think of words that describe their relationship with Christ. Say: *The more we understand about who Jesus is, the greater will flow our praise to Him.*

Begin with prayer for the new study in John.

### ◆ GET INTO THE WORD Idea

To enhance the discussion of John 1:1-5, display a tear sheet with four words describing Jesus: *Word, Creator, Life, and Light*. Ask learners to form four groups and give each group one word from the list. Using their Bibles and *Personal Study Guides*, assign each group to identify the meaning of their term. As groups report, ask learners to identify why this trait of Jesus is worthy of their gratitude.

### ◆ GET INTO THE WORD Idea

As you discuss John 1:9-14, point out that the phrase "among us" includes the idea that Jesus moved in next door to us. Challenge learners to think about the implications of that truth. **Q: How would your life be different if Jesus lived next door?**

### ◆ GET INTO THE WORD Idea

To conclude the study of John 1:16-18, display on the markerboard or a tear sheet this question: *What have you learned about Jesus that helps you better know God?* As learners consider the question, give your response. Then call on volunteers to give their responses and insights.

### ◆ STAY ON TRACK

#### "beginning" (1:1)

The phrase "In the beginning" may call to mind Genesis 1:1, the creation story. It is appropriate to briefly reference the story, emphasize Christ's existence even before creation and that John was talking about physical and spiritual life in these verses. Avoid getting sidetracked on questions about details of the creation story.

#### "glory" (1:14)

In the Old Testament God was not seen. People saw His presence in a cloud or fire. But when God sent Jesus to earth they saw Him and those who became His children recognized His honor as revealed through Christ. When we give glory to Jesus, we recognize His uniqueness; we honor and praise Him.

## REFLECT

& Evaluate

Why is it crucial to affirm Jesus Christ as the Word of God, God, and the One who reveals God?

How can your gratitude to Christ for who He is motivate you to minister in His name?

How can you use the truths of this lesson to share Christ with someone this week?