

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Study of John</i>
	APRIL 11	21

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

JOHN 1:1-18

APRIL 11, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying John 1:1-18. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: JESUS, THE WORD, IS GOD. HE EXISTED IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD, AND HE WAS ACTIVE IN CREATION.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: IN COMING TO EARTH, JESUS BROUGHT THE HOPE OF SALVATION AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR US "TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD" BY BELIEVING IN HIM.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: WHILE REMAINING COMPLETELY GOD, JESUS BECAME COMPLETELY MAN AND LIVED LIKE US. HIS MINISTRY ON EARTH BEGAN AT BIRTH AND ENDED IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION. IT'S ONLY THROUGH JESUS THAT WE RECEIVE FORGIVENESS AND ETERNAL LIFE.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 What is the weirdest Bible story or command you've ever heard?

- 2 If you were given the chance to ask God to explain one thing about the Bible, what would it be and why?

Words are more than a form of self-expression; they are our primary means of self-revelation. People really get to know who we are through our words. Jesus was called the Word of God in John 1, meaning He is God's revelation of Himself to us. When the Word became flesh, Jesus brought the hope of salvation and the opportunity for us to become children of God by believing in Him.

While the basic message of the gospel is simple and clear, there are many elements of the Christian faith that are not easy to understand. One of those is how Jesus could be both God and man at the same time, and why God's love for us required Jesus to be just that. Today's study of John 1:1-18 teaches that Jesus was both God and man and helps us understand how important this truth is to the gospel we share with others. Love caused God to act by sending Jesus, love requires that we act too.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

Unlike the other Gospel writers, John didn't begin with a genealogy or a background overview. He opened his book by describing Jesus the Messiah, or Chosen One. John made it clear from verse 1 that Jesus is God, and his entire Gospel would be geared toward proving that fact.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:1-4.

- Why do you think John began his Gospel by talking about how Jesus existed from eternity past?

Many people argue that Jesus was a prophet who did good works but wasn't the Son of God. How do John's words argue against that idea?

- What does it mean that Jesus is "the Word"?

By describing Jesus as "the Word," John presented Jesus as God's expression of Himself to us. Through creation and then again in coming to earth, Jesus revealed what God wanted us to know about Him and about who we are in Him. Before Jesus was born in a manger, before the angel told Mary she was pregnant, and before any of the Old Testament prophets spoke about a Messiah, Jesus was with God, and He was God.

- Why was it important for John to point out that Jesus had a role in creation (v. 3)?
- Read Genesis 1. What words or phrases are the same or similar in Genesis 1 and John 1:1-5?

In the same way that God the Father brought physical life through Jesus in creation (Ps. 33:9), He also brought spiritual life through Jesus. Jesus came to earth to bring salvation to mankind. John points to the Son's unity with the Father that we see throughout all of Scripture. John 1:1-4 sets the stage for the good news of the gospel: Jesus is the Son of God, and in Him is eternal life.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:10-11,14-15.

- Some people claim that Jesus was not actually a real historical person. If Jesus was completely human, what facts about Him must be true? (Encourage such answers as "He must have a human body, emotions," etc.).

- Why is it necessary for people to understand Jesus is fully human?

A major theme in John's Gospel is the rejection Jesus encountered, including from many Jews who didn't recognize Him as the Messiah. Even with the countless signs, fulfilled prophecies, and Jesus' own statements about Himself, they did not accept Jesus as God's Son. Although they were a religious people, they did not understand who Jesus was because they expected something totally different.

- God wasn't trying to disguise Jesus from anyone. Why, then, did Jesus seem so different from what everyone expected?

- What kind of savior do you think the Jewish people expected?

- What kind of savior are the people around you looking for?

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:12-13,16-18.

Jesus came to restore the whole world back to a right relationship with God. Our physical bloodlines don't decide where we will spend eternity; only a personal relationship with God through Jesus, the Messiah, can make that happen. Because He loves us, God made a way for us.

- Why do you think the Jewish people had a hard time accepting that Jesus came to save the whole world and not just the Jews?

To think that God wanted to save the entire world was a crazy idea to the Jewish people. They grew up believing the Messiah would save only the Jews. No wonder so many Jews thought Jesus was preaching false words.

- How has your family or cultural background shaped your spiritual journey?
- How has family or cultural background shaped the spiritual journey of a non-Christian you know?

In verses 16-17, John reminded his readers that Christ is superior to the Old Testament law. The Mosaic law, a law we could never live up to, wasn't intended to bring salvation but to highlight our need for a Savior. Christ lived in perfect obedience to the law and fulfilled it so we don't have to. As a result, we can rest in God's abundant and ongoing "grace in place of grace" (v. 16).

- What did Jesus' death and resurrection accomplish for us?

Notes:

- If you're a Christ-follower, how have you experienced the "grace in place of grace" John talked about in verse 16?

When Jesus moved into our neighborhood, He came bearing the full glory of God—the same glory that sent fire from heaven and filled the temple with a bright cloud (2 Chron. 7:1-3; 5:14). Through Christ, the very glory of God became accessible to everyone, and we're all invited into His presence. But we can't miss the fact that when Jesus "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (v. 14). He literally became human, meaning He lived like us. He was susceptible to sickness, death, and a full range of emotions. Jesus is both God and man, and while it may be challenging for us to grasp this, we can't minimize either His humanity or divinity.

God did more than shout down from heaven, "I love you!" to the people on earth. He demonstrated His love by sending Jesus to die on the cross. That's the nature of love—it's more than mere emotion or sentiment. True love is intentional and action-oriented. When we begin to grasp the depth of Jesus' love for us, we will find ourselves freed to love each other in that same sacrificial and intentional kind of way.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- Why is it dangerous to think of Jesus as only God and not also fully human? What is the danger of seeing Him as a man, but not God?
- What did love require God to do when He saw that humanity was lost and selfish?
- What does love require us to do when we see that same qualities in our families, coworkers, and neighbors?

PRAY

To close today's group time, thank God for sending His love and grace to us through His Son. End the time praising God for the sacrifice He made on our behalf. Challenge your group members to be motivated by the gospel in the coming weeks.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - How has thinking about God's love shown through Jesus changed your focus this week?

 - What steps have you taken to share the truth of the gospel with someone in need this week?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize John 1:14.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: John 1:19-50.

JOHN 1:1-18

1:1–18. John’s prologue presents Jesus as the eternal, preexistent Word-become-flesh (vv. 1, 14) and as the one-of-a-kind Son of the Father who is himself God (vv. 1, 18). Jesus brought God’s plan of salvation to a culmination. Previous to Jesus this plan included God giving the law through Moses (v. 17), his dwelling among his people in the tabernacle (v. 14), and the sending of John the Baptist (vv. 6–8, 15). The prologue introduces several themes that are emphasized later in the Gospel, including Jesus as life, light, and truth, believers as God’s children, and the world’s rejection of Jesus.

Notes:

1:1. In the beginning was the Word echoes Gn 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” John located Jesus’s existence in eternity past with God. The Word was God: Not only did Jesus exist before creation, he is also the same God who created the heavens and the earth. “The Word” (Gk Logos) conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech (Ps 19:1–4). God’s Word is effective. He speaks, and things come into being (Gn 1:3, 9; Is 55:11–12).

1:2–3. Everything that exists owes its existence to Jesus.

1:4–5. The references to life ... light, and darkness continue to draw on Genesis themes (cp. Gn 1:3–5, 14–18, 20–31; 2:7; 3:20). Light symbolism is also found in later OT messianic passages (Is 9:2; 42:6–7; 49:6; 60:1–5; Mal 4:2; cp. Lk 1:78–79).

1:6. Unlike Jesus, John the Baptist was merely a man, but like Jesus he had a particular mission to perform.

1:9. As the rest of John’s Gospel makes clear, all did not in fact receive the light, though the light was available to all.

1:10–11. His own people did not receive him refers to the Jewish people, the recipients of God’s covenants, the law, and promises of a Messiah (Rm 9:4). Messiah’s rejection by the Jews despite convincing proofs of his messiahship

(esp. the “signs”) is a major subject in the first half of John’s Gospel (cp. 12:37).

1:12–13. Reference to children of God builds on the OT characterization of Israel as God’s children (Dt 14:1; cp. Ex 4:22). Born, not of natural descent ... but of God makes clear that true children of God come into being through faith in Messiah, not physical birth or ethnic descent (8:41–47; cp. 3:16). This opens the way for Gentiles to become God’s children (11:51–52; cp. 10:16).

1:14. The Word continues the theme of 1:1. Became flesh does not mean the Word stopped being God; rather, the Word was made flesh. Dwelt among us literally means “pitched his tent” (Gk skenoō), an allusion to God’s dwelling among the Israelites in the tabernacle (Ex 25:8–9; 33:7). In the past God demonstrated his presence to his people in the tabernacle and the temple. Now God has taken up residence among his people in the Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17). The references to God’s glory hark back to OT passages that describe the manifestation of God’s presence and glory in theophanies (appearances of God), the tabernacle, or the temple (Ex 33:22; Nm 14:10; Dt 5:22). The Greek word monogenēs underlying one and only Son from the Father means “only child” (Jdg 11:34; Jr 6:26; Am 8:10; Zch 12:10). “Only” may mean “one of a kind,” as in the case of Isaac, who is called Abraham’s “one of a kind” son in Gn 22:2, 12, 16 (in contrast to Ishmael, cp. Heb 11:17). In the OT, Israel and the Son of David are called God’s “firstborn” son (see Ps 89:27). The reference to God’s “giving” of his “one and only Son” in Jn 3:16, 18 may allude to Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Gn 22).

Full of grace and truth recalls “faithful love (Hb chesed) and truth (Hb emet)” in Ex 34:6 (cp. Ex 33:18–19), where the expression refers to God’s covenant faithfulness to his people Israel. According to John, God’s covenant faithfulness found ultimate expression in his sending of his “one and only Son,” Jesus.

Notes:

1:15. John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus (Lk 1:24, 26), and he started his ministry earlier than Jesus (Lk 3:1–20). Usually, priority in time (such as being the firstborn) implied preeminence, but Jesus’s preexistence overrode John’s temporal precedence.

Notes:

1:16. This verse resumes the thought of 1:14. We refers to the same group as “we” and “us” in v. 14, that is, the apostolic circle or the whole believing community.

1:17. The contrast between the law and grace and truth is not that the law was bad and Jesus was good; rather, both the giving of the law and the coming of Jesus Christ mark stages in God’s reaching out to humanity. Jesus, however, marks the final, definitive revelation of God’s grace and truth. He is superior to Abraham (8:53), Jacob (4:12), and Moses (5:46–47; cp. 9:28).

1:18. No one has ever seen God—not even Moses (Ex 33:18–23). God is spirit (4:24), and humans are sinful, preferring darkness to light (3:19). Thus humans are unable to see God in his fullness. But Jesus Christ, the one and only Son who is himself God (1:1), has revealed God the Father in a way that Moses and the law (1:17) never could. As Jesus says later in John’s Gospel, “The one who has seen me has seen the Father” (14:9).