

John 1:1-18

Lesson 1
For September 21, 2008

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LEADER'S GUIDE

For discussion following the sermon on September 21, 2008

The Prologue

Key Points

Who is Jesus Christ? A prophet? A Teacher? A Rabbi? What happened when his identity was revealed by John the Baptist as a long-awaited Messiah, that Jesus Christ was in fact God incarnate? Surely this would have been the greatest news that the people of that day could hear. But was it true, and if so, what changes would that mean for them, for humanity? What would be the difference in acceptance or rejection, in faith and unbelief? In the Prologue of the Gospel of John we will discover:

- Jesus Christ: His Deity and Humanity
- God's purposes in redemption
- The dynamic of our belief/unbelief

The Apostle John, a disciple of John the Baptist, believed that Jesus was indeed who John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus to be, the Son of God. That belief turned into response, and what ensued was an intimate relationship with the Word incarnate. He became an eyewitness to both the humanity and the deity of Jesus Christ. He not only believed, he also set out to reveal Jesus in such a way that the world would believe. What was true in those days is true in our day: the world largely denies the claims that Jesus is the Son of God. What did John know that the religious leaders missed? What do we need to know; what is most important about the incarnation of Christ?

5. From these verses how would you refute someone who thinks/says that Jesus is not equal to the Father God?
 6. We have been redeemed out of “darkness” and into the “light” with the promise of hope of eternal life. If you had continued in darkness, where do you think you would be today? From what has God redeemed you? (*Reflection question from the bulletin*).
- In what ways is Christ as “life” and “light” important to you? Is this only spiritual or also physical?
7. Is there a difference in “receiving” and “believing” Christ (v.12)? How do the two terms complement each other? From verses 12 and 13 what is God's part in us becoming children of God and what is our response?
 8. While this text does not describe them, what actions does the rest of Scripture say are indications of truly “receiving” and “believing”?
 9. In verses 16 and 17 John makes a distinction between “law” and “grace and truth.” What is the significance of the distinction? In John's thinking are law and grace compatible or antithetical? What difference does it make in our lives? (*Grace doesn't replace law, it fulfills it and makes keeping it possible.*)

Jesus Christ didn't simply appear in a time of history several millennial after the creation of the world. He was in existence *before* creation, before time. From eternity past he was in close relationship with God the Father; "the Word (Jesus Christ) was *with* God, and the Word was God" (co-equal). It was out of this relationship that Jesus was to become "God's agent in creation, the fount of life and light,"¹ and God's means of redemption for a fallen world.

What barriers stand in the way of accepting this theological truth? How do we guard against rejecting the claims of Christ? Humanity is prone to love darkness more than light, to accept that which is false instead of that which is true, to pursue our own glory rather than the glory of God. As we embark on this journey through the Gospel of John, may the illuminating ministry of the Spirit bring us greater understanding of the Word incarnate, and may we, like the Apostle John, *believe!*

¹ *The Gospel According to John*, D. A. Carson, pg. 113

Leader's Guide

Personal Preparation

- Read through the *Introduction* in the notebooks provided. As you begin this series, think about some of the things that you personally hope to get out of *The Gospel of John* and write them below:
- Group anticipation: as you consider the people God has placed in your group, what work do you hope God will accomplish for your group, or for specific people in your group? Write down several specific prayer requests.

Group Preparation

- As you begin take time for introductions. In addition to sharing information about their lives, you might want to consider asking people where they are in their spiritual journey. It is a way of helping connect spiritually and will give you insights into the dynamics of your group.
- Outline expectations for the group: What they can expect, perhaps what you anticipate, and guidelines for engagement. Those guidelines can be as simple as reminding them of confidentiality issues, asking them to refrain from monopolizing the conversation, as well as sharing only what is appropriate for the group.

Discussion Questions

1. The first verse of John begins with the relationship of two of the three Persons of the Trinity (the Spirit is not mentioned here). The Word (Jesus Christ) was with God and was God. How would you explain that Jesus is God and was with God? *The "Word does not by Himself make up the entire Godhead; nevertheless the divinity that belong to the rest of the Godhead belongs to Him (Tasker, pg. 45). "The Word was with God, God's eternal Fellow; the Word was God, God's own Self." Carson pg. 117*
2. There are important factors in the relationship of God the Father with God the Son. What are they? What happens if we miss them?
3. IF Jesus did not exist before creation and/or Jesus were not fully God, what difference would it make to your understanding and belief in Christ's redeeming work?
4. While many people accept the goodness of Jesus Christ, by and large the world rejects the claims of his deity. What question(s) would you ask someone who doesn't believe? How would you respond to their unbelief?