

**Series:** Receiving life by believing in God's Son (a Gospel of John study)

**Sermon Text:** John 1:1-5, 14-18

**Kids Word:** The Word

The Gospel of the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, provides a clearly stated purpose. *John 20:30-31* says, “**Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**” Some people demand to have all their questions satisfied before bowing to Jesus, yet John claimed his limited account was enough to bring anyone to faith. As we read it, our Savior and friend emerges from the pages as a real person in the real world. He shows us all we could become, if we too would rely on His infinite Father who will gladly supply whatever we need. Our portion today will challenge us to consider this...

**BIG IDEA: Jesus is fully God and fully human.**

**Let's consider some key ideas and applications in our text.**

***1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***

***Jesus is the Word of God. (1:1)***

- John assumed his readers would be familiar with the Old Testament and set out to connect the dots. If you're a regular Bible reader, the words “***In the beginning***” take you back to Genesis 1 “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” Professor NT Wright commented, “*Whatever else John is going to tell us, he wants us to see his book as the story of God and the world, not just the story of one character in one place and time. This book is about the creator God acting in a new way within his much-loved creation. It is about the way in which the long story which began in Genesis reached the climax the creator had always intended...through ‘the Word’. In Genesis 1, the climax is the creation of humans, made in God’s image. In John 1, the climax is the arrival of a human being, the Word become ‘flesh’.*”
- What I love about Scripture, and what we often miss by not knowing history, is how the Bible sometimes uses pagan philosophies as a launching pad to teach truth. Moses did this a lot in Genesis. Paul did this in Athens (Acts 17) when he noticed an altar dedicated “*to the unknown God.*” Realizing they were religious but misguided, he used their altar to point them toward the true God. The Apostle John used the same approach here. For at least 3 centuries before Jesus appeared, [Greek philosophers](#) spoke of an uncreated, divine mind that gave meaning and order to the universe. Guess what they called it? ***The Word (logos)***! So, in response to this idea John

wrote, ***“The Word you’ve philosophized about actually exists. It was in the beginning, it was with God, it was God, it became flesh.”*** We too can use this biblical approach as we encounter errant human philosophies. Instead of caving or getting angry, we could listen closely to their beliefs and find ways to start conversations about Jesus that help them connect the dots.

- Hebrews 4:12-13 says, *“The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit...discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”* In Scripture, **the Word** is regularly personified. Often, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (called [the Septuagint](#)) **“Word (logos) of God”** (or **“Word of the Lord”**) refers to an action rather than an idea. **The Word** appears in Genesis 1 as the means God used to create. Every time He said, *“Let there be...”*, something appeared (cf. Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; Psalm 33:6). In the Old Testament, we see **the Word** of God delivering (Psalm 107:20), judging (Psalm 29), and accomplishing whatever it wants (Isaiah 55:11). **The Word** of God is how the prophets came to know God’s mind and speak on His behalf (cf. Isaiah 38:4; Jeremiah 1:4; Ezekiel 1:3). In Proverbs, **the Word** of God is even personified as *“wisdom”* (cf. 8:22-31). Therefore, **the Word** of God is MORE than letters in a book. This phrase represents God being active in the world. I’ll say 2 quick things about this... First, if we call ourselves *“people of **the Word**”*, we too should be active in the world, right? If your faith isn’t active, it’s probably not real (cf. James 2:14-16). Later in the chapter, we’ll see how John discussed *“faith”* in an active way. Secondly, **the Word** of God is the Bible’s central theme. No other religious system or worldview has their god becoming one of us to pay a price we deserved so that we can be with him forever. Every other worldview is about man in search of god, but Christianity is God in search of man, and the incarnation of **the Word** proves that. Let’s move into **verses 2-5** to learn more about what it means that **Jesus is the Word of God**.

***2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.***

***Jesus is the co-Creator and sustainer of life. (1:2-3)***

- John’s opening chapter provides a thorough preview of his entire account and describes how God rebooted creation through one called, **“The Word”**, who was at creation’s genesis. While

it's mindboggling to process, He has no beginning or end (cf. Revelation 21:6) and has always existed independent of creation and outside of time (cf. John 17:5, 24). The **Word was with** (close beside) **God** and simultaneously **was God**. They share the same essence and being but are distinct. We should note a [misunderstanding of Colossians 1:15-17](#) has led some to think Jesus was the first created being. This includes the 3<sup>rd</sup> century [false teacher Arius](#), [the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](#) (the Mormons), and [the Jehovah's Witnesses](#). John doubled down on Jesus' involvement in every creative act by stating positively, "***all things were made through him***" and then negatively, "***without him was not anything made that was made.***"

- John also attributed **life-giving power to the Word. Life was in him, and this life was the light of humanity**. He is clearly life's source and sustainer. Colossians 1:17 says, "*He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*" Since nothing survives apart from Him, then He's always nearby (omnipresent) and never "*far off.*" Matthew traced Christ's genealogy back to Abraham and Luke traced it back to Adam, but John traced it back to **life** and **light**, the two images Moses used to describe God in Genesis. Moses said, "*In the beginning... darkness was over the face of the deep...And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light.*" Professor NT Wright offered this insightful thought, "*The Word challenged the darkness (at/in) creation and now challenges the darkness found, tragically, within creation itself. The Word is bringing into being the new creation, in which God says once more, 'Let there be light!' ...This is the central problem which dominates the whole gospel story. Jesus comes to God's people, and God's people do what the rest of the world do: they prefer darkness to light.*"
- Sadly, darkness feels so overwhelming or normal that people struggle to believe as we offer them Gospel **light**. The presence of evil leads many to question God's existence and power. While this concern is important and challenging, John assures us the creative pattern still holds true, "***The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome (extinguish) it.***" Pastor Bruce Milne said this, "*People regularly exclaim at what they see as God's indifference to human tragedy and pain. If only God would appear and accept some responsibility or give some help, then perhaps they would recognize and follow him. In fact, as this gospel makes clear again and again, he is not indifferent; he does care. Indeed, he could not care more, and it is because of this that he came.*" God became one of us to experience the same sufferings, temptations, and injustices we endure. Certainly, He deserves the benefit of our doubt, right?

Psalm 46:10 says, “*Be still, and know that I am God.*” The phrase “*be still*” comes from the Hebrew word *raphah*, which means to “*slacken, sink, or relax.*” Friends, this is our invitation to allow God to help carry all those parts of life that are too big for us. Like His Father, Jesus extended an identical invitation in Matthew 11:28-30 by saying, “*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*” Jesus Christ, the eternal God, invites you to stop fearing, fretting, and fixating by trusting Him to handle all the things you can’t seem to figure out. The next set of verses make the theme of John’s gospel account quite clear...if you want to know who the true God is, look long and hard at Jesus and believe! So far, we’ve seen that Jesus is fully God--***He is the Word of God, the co-Creator, and the sustainer of life.*** Now, let’s consider how He is fully human.

***14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen (gazed upon) his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'') ...18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.***

***Jesus is God in a human body.*** (1:14-15, 18; check out verse 18 in the New Living Translation!)

- Two quick thoughts as we dive in: 1) ***Verse 15*** mentions the *witness* of ***John the Baptist***, who we’ll get to know next week. 2) Note how the terms “***God***” and “***the Word***” are already being exchanged for “***Father***” and “***Son***.” Now, does it surprise you that a being as high and holy as God can be known? Some might think that after creation fell, God would’ve chosen to remain hidden or far off. Yet the eternal being in verses 1-5 became a human being in verses 14-18. The being didn’t cease to be God or become “*less*”; He somehow became “*more*” by adding a human nature to His divine nature. He became the “*God-man*.” ***Verse 17*** makes it clear that ***Jesus*** is “***the Word became flesh.***” Further proof that we’re not reading ***Jesus*** into this is in 2 Corinthians 4:6 which says, “*For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” Jesus also affirmed He was ***the Word made flesh*** and embodies all of God’s qualities when He said, “*I and the Father are one...if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen my Father*” (cf. John 10:30, 14:9). It seems clear God has come to be close to His creation in the person of Jesus Christ.

- Historically, our high and holy God has sought to be known. In one sense God is our eternal dwelling place (cf. Psalm 90:1-2), but we also know of Old Testament instances where God came to  *dwell*  or literally “ *set up a tent* ”  *among*  His people, Israel. He made temporary visits to their  [tabernacle](#)  (a.k.a. the wilderness tent) and  [temple](#) , the centerpieces of their worship. Only the high priest could access to the chamber where God  *dwelled* . Now, unpack  *verse 14*  with this in mind... “ *the Word*  (God)  *became flesh*  (Jesus)  *and dwelt*  (tabernacled)  *among us, and we have seen his glory.* ”  *Jesus*  is a new tabernacle/temple offering God’s people direct and permanent access to our Creator’s  *glory*  all day, every day! The book of Hebrews affirms this, declares the  *glory*  that fills  *Jesus*  is the same  *glory*  that filled  [the Old Testament tabernacle and temple](#) , and explains how  Jesus replaced their function  (cf. Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:1–11; Matthew 17:1–8). Revelation 21 also reveals the body of Jesus is the only true temple that God will recognize from the 1<sup>st</sup> century into eternity. While our sin can trick us into thinking God is far off or wouldn’t want to be around us, the Bible’s message is the exact opposite! God has taken extreme measures to be as close to us as possible in the person of Jesus Christ.
- No doubt, God’s white-hot holy  *glory*  is too much for sinful people to experience. I mean, we can’t even view the sun’s glory without some sort of filter, right? In Exodus 33, there was a mountain moment where God gave Moses a glimpse of His back but said, “ *You cannot see My face, for  [no man can see Me and live!](#)* ”  *John 1:18*  affirms  *no one has ever fully seen God* , but it also makes an incredible announcement that God  *made*  a way for us to see Him in the face of Jesus Christ. Jesus becomes like a special telescopic filter. 1 Corinthians 13 says the picture is still dim “ *like a cloudy mirror* ” but promises a future where we’ll view our Creator’s unfiltered glory “ *face-to-face* ” (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18). Glance back at  *verse 14* ...it says, “ *the only God, who is at the Father's side*  (KJV “ *in the bosom of the Father* ”),  *he has made him known.* ” We are being told “ *God reached into His being, plucked out His own heart, and sent it to us in the form of Jesus.* ” At the risk of getting too technical, the phrase “ *made him known* ” is a  [single Greek verb](#)  meaning “ *to explain or clarify.* ” We use a form of this verb to describe our Bible teaching method--we “ *exegete* ” (explain/clarify)  *the Word*  of God. Like John, we believe Jesus explains God. So, the  *Father’s glory*  is revealed to us through lengthy  *gazes upon*  the  *Son* .
- Speaking of “ *Father* ”, it’s interesting that God portrays Himself as a “ *Father* ” rather than a “ *Mother* ”, then came to earth as a “ *man* ” rather than a “ *woman.* ” We must not minimize these

masculine terms because they matter to God's master plan. Romans 5 explains how God deals with us through a system called "[federalism](#)", which simply means Adam was our "*federal head*" or representative. In Scripture, God also made a big deal about [headship](#) and [covenants](#), which are promises made (technically "*cut*") with heads of families. The thing with federalism is how the representative acts on behalf of those he represents. Would you say Adam was a good or bad covenant representative? He is both our federal head (representative) and seminal head (familial/genetic). Not only did he represent us poorly before God, but because we're his offspring, we also carry his fallen nature. Are you starting to see why we need a new rep?

- I know I'm piling on big words, but they're important and why the Apostle John took us back to "*in the beginning*." He was introducing humanity's new representative, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became a man to rectify things between us and God. Throughout history, God has appointed two representatives: the man, "*Adam*" and the man, "*Christ Jesus*", who is called "[the last Adam](#)" in 1 Corinthians 15. Covenants are always mediated by men in the Bible, and Jesus is portrayed as the ultimate mediator between God and humans (cf. 1 Timothy 2:5). If Jesus isn't our new rep/head of family by grace through faith, then God can't legally declare us justified and our sinful "*rap sheet*" can't be pardoned (expunged). While the world operates under a [cultural/gender fluid narrative](#), God has always operated under a [covenantal narrative with specific reasons for making us male and female](#). Generations are formed by men and their families. Men who leave and cleave to their wives create a generation out of a family. Having the proper narrative (story) in view helps our lifestyle align with our Creator's design. Jesus not only came to rectify our relationship with God; He changed our story by starting it all over! He wasn't merely a symbolic representative; He became our substitute by living in this world of sorrows and modeling how it looks to trust God. Jesus became like us...he got tired, hungry, angry, went to the bathroom, felt pain, and faced every kind of sinful temptation. However, unlike our first representative, Jesus never sinned and by grace through faith, imperfect people can be credited with His perfect, substitutionary life (cf. Hebrews 4:14-16). Before we move on, I'd be remiss to overlook how Jesus' male body is not a temporary *dwelling* place since He is currently seated beside His Father in Heaven in the form of His resurrected, [male, human body](#)! In Acts 1:11, the angels promised, "*This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.*" While we await His physical

return, we've been given His written **Word** and indwelling Spirit to maintain our permanent union and communion with Him (sort of like a Wi-Fi connection).

- Truly, it's a massive thing to say, "**Jesus is God in a human body.**" While it's a huge concept, we hope our extensive sermon notes with numerous hyperlinks will help you process it. Before we close today, there's just a little more goodness to cover in *verses*...

**16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**

**Jesus reveals the God of grace and truth. (1:16-18)**

- If this phrasing doesn't seem odd to you, you're not reading close enough. How is the fullness of Jesus considered "**grace upon grace**" when compared with **the law given through Moses**? Could it be that the Old and New Testaments are not opposed to one another? Could they be one cohesive story of **grace and truth**? Yes! While the Old Testament contained **laws**, every **law** reveals something about God. In this sense, His **laws** became a means of **grace** because the high and holy Creator has no obligation to reveal Himself to the fallen creation. Many people fail to see grace in God's **laws**, but if you think about it, they clarify for us the proper method for dealing with sin's guilt and shame (e.g., [the sacrificial system](#)). God has always been full of **grace and truth**, so **Grace** is not some New Testament invention that somehow softens Him. An honest investigation of God's OT **laws** reveals they weren't given to increase our misery (sin causes that cf. Romans 8:3-4); rather God's **laws** were poured out in pure love to reveal His holy, graceful character and to keep people holistically safe and healthy. God's **laws given through Moses** are saturated with **grace**, and therefore, it was appropriate for John to call the arrival of Jesus, "**grace upon grace.**"
- Some people think Jesus is "**sweet, loving, and forgiving**" while somehow His Old Testament Dad is "**judgmental, unloving, and punitive.**" Our passage refutes such ideas! The **Father** sent the **Son** to be His exact replica, so Jesus is the perfect image bearer who shows us what God is like. God never changes nor evolves (cf. Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17). Therefore, the **Father** is always like **Jesus**, and **Jesus** is always like the **Father**. As you read the Old Testament, God should be viewed as Christlike. As you read the New Testament, Christ should be viewed as Godlike. It's also true that Jesus would've never come to show us

qualities like love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness if the *Father* had not sent Him. So, if the Old Testament leaves any doubt as to what God is like, *Jesus* clears up any confusion.

- Among other things, this proves worship helps us comprehend God. Here's what I mean...it's a fool's errand to think, "*I'll give God a try after I independently gather all the facts.*" First, how does one "*gather all the facts*" or "satisfy every question" about an infinite God? Second, God is meant to be experienced, not just known. The Greeks used 2 complementary terms to explain how there is knowledge we learn through facts ([gnosis](#)) and knowledge we learn through experience ([epignosis](#)). Factual knowledge is only partial knowledge. In God's design, worship is vital to our learning experience. What's the most delicious food you've ever eaten? Got it?! It had a texture, taste, and smell, right? Could you experience with that food been the same if you only observed it in the scientific sense or only heard people describe facts about it? No way...you had to experience it!

Let's pray...Father, unless we're in relationship with you and people who know you, then we will be deficient in understanding. In that case, you'd be like some mythical or historical figure that we've only read about but never encountered. It's no wonder your Word prioritizes being physically present together and inviting non-Christians to observe and experience both our Sunday worship AND daily lifestyle. To be whole people we must learn through facts that we also experience. Our whole being needs to be engaged in the process or else it's not a true relationship. Your Word is filled with "*one another*" commands (see [this link](#) and [this link](#)) that can't be understood without practice. While people need time to think about you, we can never expect them to figure you out on their own. They need our Spirit-filled presence more than they need "*space to figure things out.*" After all, you didn't remain "*far off*", but the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Give us more than just a fuller, academic appreciation for the God-man Jesus Christ. Fill us with a desire to experience a relationship with you and an urgency to make disciples of others by inviting them to observe and experience our Sunday worship and how we live every day. Amen.

We invite you to join us in singing, "*Behold the Lamb.*"

So, what's your NEXT STEP?

- Remember, our next step always begins with faith in Christ. Either placing faith in Him for the first time or exercising faith to repent, change, and grow. Either way, His Spirit will help you.

**Quotes/Additional thoughts:**

- **The gospel genre:** "The main genre is gospel, which combines three ingredients—what Jesus did, what Jesus said (discourse and dialogue), and people's responses to Jesus. Within this format the usual gospel subgenres are found: calling stories, recognition stories, witness



stories, conflict stories, encounter stories, miracle stories, discourses, proverbs or sayings, passion stories, resurrection stories, and post-resurrection appearances.” The ESV Study Bible

- **Why 4 gospels?** Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John gave the world 4 historical accounts of the life of Jesus Christ. While their main points are the same, each writer provided unique details, which lends more credibility to their accounts than had they copied each other. John’s account presents Jesus as “*the Word made flesh*” --the Co-Creator, who came to earth as a real person and displayed a deep love for His people, even becoming a close friend of John, Peter, Mary, and many others. Pastor Bruce Milne wrote, “The difficulty, however, is greatly reduced if John sees his task as complementing the other writers rather than as replacing them, or writing a full, comprehensive account of Jesus’ ministry...John has already given ample stress to the revealing of Jesus’ glory so that the transfiguration is not essential to his account, particularly as his presentation identifies the cross as the supreme moment of the glorification of the Son...Material which appears only in John...encompasses large sections of John’s earlier chapters, e.g. the wedding at Cana, and the conversations with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. It also includes the raising of Lazarus, the discussions with the Jews, and the farewell discourses and foot-washing. A significant reason for the differences, however, arises from the fact that John concentrates almost entirely on the ministry of Jesus in and around Jerusalem during the temple feasts. The synoptic writers by contrast concentrate to a great extent on ministry in the north, around Galilee...The synoptic writers in their record of Jesus’ teaching concentrate on his ministry in the north, in the Galilean region of his upbringing. John’s primary focus, as we have already noted, was the more sophisticated, theologically aware milieu of Jerusalem. In addition, the methods and forms of the Johannine discourses have been shown to be congruent with those of synagogue teaching...John does have his equivalent to the parables, though the form is less of a story...John sets Jesus in relation to three Passovers and so requires a duration of two to three years...The mystery of Jesus Christ is the theme of this gospel; always beyond us, yet always summoning us to explore it more fully.”
- **The purpose of John:** “The great Bible teacher of yesteryear Merrill Tenney summed up the purpose of the Gospel of John this way: The entire book is an attempt to swing the reader to the side of acceptance, as embodied in the word believe. The underlying Greek word, *pisteuo*, is used no less than ninety-eight times in the Gospel and is customarily translated believe, though in a few instances it is rendered trust or commit. Never does it mean a mere assent to a proposition. It usually means acknowledgement of some personal claim, or even a complete personal commitment to some ideal or person. John sought to lead his readers to a settled faith.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **Purpose, Occasion, and Background:** “The Gospel of John was written by the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, a Palestinian Jew and a member of Jesus’ inner apostolic circle during his earthly ministry. John’s original audience consisted of both Jews and Gentiles living in the larger Greco-Roman world in Ephesus and beyond toward the close of the first century A.D. He frequently explains Jewish customs and Palestinian geography and translates Aramaic terms into Greek (see note on 1:38), thus showing awareness of non-Jewish readers. He also presents Jesus as the Word become flesh against the backdrop of Greek thought that included Stoicism and early Gnosticism. But John also shows awareness of Jewish readers as he demonstrates Jesus to be the Jewish Messiah, the fulfillment of many OT themes, and the Son of God who was sent by God the Father to reveal the only true God and to provide redemption

for humanity. The purpose statement in 20:30–31 makes it appear that John wrote with an evangelistic intent. However, his depth of teaching shows that he wanted readers not only to come to initial saving faith in Jesus but also to grow into a rich, well-informed faith. John’s central contention is that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and Son of God, and that by believing in him people may have eternal life. To this end, he marshals the evidence of several selected messianic signs performed by Jesus and of a series of witnesses to Jesus—including the Scriptures, John the Baptist, Jesus himself, God the Father, Jesus’ works, the Spirit, and John himself. It is also likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people, a concept that would be especially forceful if the date of composition (as seems likely) was subsequent to A.D. 70 (the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple).” The ESV Study Bible

- **Christ’s genealogy:** “In 1:4, John’s Gospel does something not done by the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Matthew traces Christ’s genealogy back to Abraham. Luke traces His roots to the first human, Adam. But John reaches beyond them to the creation of the universe. John states that in Jesus Christ was life and light, two images Moses used in reference to God in Genesis 1. The Creator spoke the universe into existence and then filled it with the light of His truth (Gen. 1:3). The Creator then began filling the earth with life: vegetation, sea creatures, birds, land animals, and His crowning achievement, humanity...John says, in effect, ‘In the beginning, God the Son created humanity and filled them with life. He then came to earth as a human to bring life again to humanity, which is spiritually dead because of sin.’” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **The Word’s life-giving activity:** “The fruit of the Word’s activity in mediating creation was not just the coming into existence of the world ‘in the beginning’, but the emergence of life within it (4). We are driven beyond the initial act of creation to the Word’s ongoing sustenance of the universe; the logos is the life-giver. Finally considered, all life derives from him (Acts 17:8, ‘For in him we live and move and have our being’). ‘There is no such thing as a godless person; he is too near every one of us’ (Brunner)...This life John sees in terms of light (4), another elemental religious symbol, and another echo of Genesis chapter 1, as the light shines in the darkness (Gn. 1:3) in the act of creation...John says three things about this logos-light. It offers illumination to every person—that life was the light of men (4); it shines in the context of darkness (5); and the darkness has not overcome it (5, NIV fn.). Traditionally this has been seen as a pointer to God’s general revelation...John is alluding here to the Word’s participation, in God’s revealing himself universally to all people through conscience and in creation; a revelation which leaves them without excuse for their ignorance of God.” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **The source of light:** “The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it...The Word is the Source of life; nothing remains alive apart from Him (1:4-13)...Before we examine each of these reasons in detail, read 1:1-18, and take note of John’s deliberate progression from infinity and eternity down to the single individual, Christ, in whom resides all that is infinite and eternal...The Word is the Source of life; nothing remains alive apart from Him...In 1:4, John’s Gospel does something not done by the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Matthew traces Christ’s genealogy back to Abraham. Luke traces His roots to the first human, Adam. But John reaches beyond them to the creation of the universe. John

states that in Jesus Christ was life and light, two images Moses used in reference to God in Genesis 1. The Creator spoke the universe into existence and then filled it with the light of His truth (Gen. 1:3). The Creator then began filling the earth with life: vegetation, sea creatures, birds, land animals, and His crowning achievement, humanity...John says, in effect, “In the beginning, God the Son created humanity and filled them with life. He then came to earth as a human to bring life again to humanity, which is spiritually dead because of sin.” ...John declares that the darkness of the world did not “comprehend” the Light...In the end, darkness was not able to suppress the Light even by placing the Light in a tomb. However, the verses that follow appear to stress the mental deficiency of the darkness: its unwillingness to believe and therefore its inability to comprehend...The only hope for humankind was the Source of light, who can illumine every mind because He is more than human...When someone gains wisdom, we say he or she has been “enlightened.” ...Before He fashioned physical sources of light on the fourth day—the sun, moon, and stars—He filled the universe with the light of His presence, with truth, the foundation upon which everything else would be built...One day, perhaps sooner than we think, a new heaven and a new earth “will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them” (Rev. 22:5).” Pastor Chuck Swindoll

- **God is distinct from creation:** “This is apparently the reason for the repetition of the negative clause following, without him nothing was made that has been made. John is correcting some first-century notions of the origin of the universe which taught that it was shaped by God out of some pre-existing primeval ‘stuff’, which was in turn the explanation of the presence of evil in the universe...Creation ‘out of nothing’ means exactly what it says. The universe came to be, not out of some pre-existing material ‘something’, but out of ‘nothing’, non-existence, void. This truth implies the unqualifiable dependence of all things upon the Word of God; It also means that the universe, while utterly dependent on God, is also fundamentally distinct from him. This is a crucial truth today. Much of New Age thought, influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, obliterates the distinction between God and the world, leading to the deifying of nature and the claim that God can be experienced directly through nature. This experience of God is not of course in terms of a personal relationship with him, since God has no personal existence apart from the world. By contrast, biblical creation ‘out of nothing’ means that God is distinct from the world. As Father and Word (and Spirit) God in his full personal reality existed prior to the world. He is not dependent on the world for his existence and therefore, crucially, as a sovereignly free personal agent, he can enter into a personal relationship with his creatures within the world...while we are not to worship the creation, we should certainly care about it and be actively involved in its preservation...the creative action of our Lord Jesus Christ who called all things into being. Although affected by fallenness, they remain his personal handiwork. A lack of concern for our natural environment is a sign of a limited view of Christ, or of a spirituality which is more spiritual than Jesus and in need of balance and healing.” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Life and Light:** This “*life*” John spoke of existed *in the beginning* before everything was created, when it was just God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit enjoying one another in the most perfect community ever. The “*life*” John wants us to have through believing in Jesus Christ is the *life* that *made all things*. It’s the power that created, enlightens, and sustains *life--light* that cannot be *overcome* by *darkness*. The power God used to raise

Jesus from the dead is the same creative power that brought *life* from nothing. We now know, because of the resurrection, this power can bring dead things back to *life*! This power is clearly limitless and cannot be stopped, not even by something as final as death. It can enter the natural order of things and do what is unimaginable. So, what's your greatest problem? Think about it for a minute...got it? Now, do you seriously think it's any match for the power that *made all things* and raised Jesus from the dead? The Apostle John claims this power is available to you through believing in Jesus.

- **The living Word:** “Our words have a life which seems independent of us. When people hear them, words can change the way they think and live. Think of ‘I love you’; or, ‘It’s time to go’; or, ‘You’re fired’. These words create new situations. People respond or act accordingly. The words remain in their memory and go on affecting them...In the Old Testament, God regularly acts by means of his ‘word’. What he says, happens – in Genesis itself, and regularly thereafter. ‘By the word of the Lord’, says the psalm, ‘the heavens were made’ (33.6). God’s word is the one thing that will last, even though people and plants wither and die (Isaiah 40.6–8); God’s word will go out of his mouth and bring life, healing and hope to Israel and the whole creation (Isaiah 55.10–11). That’s part of what lies behind John’s choice of ‘Word’ here, as a way of telling us who Jesus really is.” Professor NT Wright
- **The problem of evil:** “Sin and evil do not qualify Christ’s rule over the universe. Evil’s origin and presence in a world made through the Word remain a profound mystery to which the cross alone can speak...In the Bible, evil and Satan are taken with an impressive seriousness, but never to the point of quenching the song of the angels, ‘Holy, holy, holy ... for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being’ (Rev. 4:8–11), or of qualifying the claim of the Son as he went to his sacrifice, ‘Now ... the prince of this world will be driven out’ (12:31)...we need to be alert to appearing to undermine Christ’s universal creative sovereignty and Easter victory. ‘Never forget’, as Luther said, ‘the devil is God’s devil.’ All authority in heaven and earth now belongs to the crucified and risen one (Mt. 28:18)” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **God entered our pain:** “When we sin—as individuals and collectively as humans—God has every right to turn His back and say, “Fine. Run the world your way. The mess you make of it is yours to bear.” But He doesn’t. On the contrary, the Creator voluntarily became one of us in the person of Jesus Christ, who suffered as we suffer, who was tempted as we are tempted, and who endured injustice like we will never know—yet without sin...I am comforted to know that God understands and empathizes. Through His incarnation, we can appreciate His compassion more fully. Because He lived and died as a man, we can more easily understand and accept that, in His resurrection, the Son is for us even while we feel abandoned, mistreated, or punished by God...to summarize John: We saw His glory (1:14) and we received His fullness (1:16), because Christ has “explained” the Father (1:18). The Greek term translated “explained” describes what I am doing right now: expositing. The Son has explicated the Father far better than all the best commentators can explain Scripture...People have always wondered, What’s God like? Throughout Jesus’ thirty-plus years on earth, you could have observed His visible presence.” Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- **God with us:** “John moves from description (1–14a) to testimony and so stands consciously within the community of faith (cf. 12–13). To John has been given the unspeakable privilege of being among the ‘eyewitnesses and servants of the word’ (Lk. 1:2)...John’s language (14b)

reflects the events of the exodus from Egypt, and the revelation of God at Mount Sinai and in the tabernacle in the wilderness; happenings which dominated the faith of Israel from that day to the present. As God ‘lived among’ his people then, so the Word has come to live among us (14) now; literally ‘pitched his tent among us’... The word for ‘dwell’ and ‘tent’ are cognates of the Hebrew term *š e kînâ*, which commonly refers to the revealed glory of God... Just as the people in the Old Testament revelation had seen God’s glory manifested in tabernacle and temple, so now God’s glory is revealed in his coming in person as ‘the One and Only (Son)’ ... ‘The evangelist sees the whole ministry of Jesus as a “tabernacling” in which the disciples again and again had glimpses of his glory.’ ... Because Jesus Christ is God himself come to us, he must always be in the centre of our approach to God, our thinking about God, and our relating to God (14:6)... Christ is therefore the unifying principle at the heart of all existence. ‘The eventual goal of science is to provide a single theory that describes the whole universe.’ From the theological perspective, the theory is a person, Jesus Christ.” Pastor Bruce Milne

- **Jesus is forever God AND man:** “The Son was incarnate in order to become the ‘one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim. 2:6). Christ meaning the prophesied Messiah, and Jesus being his God-given human name (Matt. 1:21). Mediatorial messiahship involved three roles: prophet (channel of divine instruction), priest (self-sacrificing intercessor), and king (lord and protector). These three, as personal relationships between each believer and Jesus Christ, never end. The visions of eternity in Revelation clearly assume that Jesus, the Lion who is the Lamb, the Amen, Faithful and True, the First and the Last, will always be to his people all that he is now. The work of the kingdom—that is, the perfecting of the church—will finish, but ‘the man Christ Jesus’ will be our beloved prophet, priest, and king forever.” (J.I. Packer)
- **Never compromise truth:** “In our time pluralism is increasingly the order of the day. This has arisen partly as political and community leaders, struggling with nations and societies torn apart by religious division, attempt to achieve a new social concord through affording equal status to the various world faiths. In addition, the communications revolution has made it increasingly difficult to maintain isolation, and religious intolerance appears in many eyes as almost the ultimate form of sin. Due to these developments Christians come under considerable pressure at times to water down the great historic distinctives of the Christian faith, such as the deity of Christ. Certainly, bigotry is never to be encouraged, and respect for those of other persuasions is always appropriate, but we cannot compromise the uniqueness of the revelation of Jesus Christ merely for the sake of an often vague communal harmony. He alone is God come to us. No other can stand alongside him or take his place. The revelation in Jesus Christ is the final revelation. In acknowledging him lies the seeds of true community.” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Grace upon grace:** “The one who was ‘full of grace and truth’ has shared the boundless riches of that divine fulness with his people, grace upon grace (RSV). This phrase is often understood as an unbroken series of ‘grace gifts’, so one blessing after another (NIV). ‘All through life we are constantly receiving “Grace instead of Grace”, for the Grace of Christ is triumphantly adequate to deal with any situation.’ 21 While this is a great truth which the New Testament elsewhere attests (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9), it is possible to take ‘instead’ (anti) in its more straightforward meaning of ‘replacing one thing by another’, and so view this phrase as asserting that the coming of God in his grace in Christ supersedes the grace of the ‘old

covenant' revelation. This interpretation can then be carried forward into verse 17, where the law given through Moses is in a sense set over against the grace and truth brought in Christ. This of course does not imply that the Old Testament revelation is set aside or the law abrogated. Rather it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and thus remains in force. This is how John consistently sees the Old Testament throughout his gospel. This interpretation also enables the continuation of the note struck by John the Baptist (15) of Christ as the one who supersedes.”  
Pastor Bruce Milne

- **Grace and truth:** “Full of grace and truth (14) has similar Old Testament echoes. In Exodus 33:19, when revealing his nature in response to Moses’ moving plea, ‘show me your glory’ (Ex. 33:18), God says, ‘I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you ... I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion’; ‘The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness’ (Ex. 34:6). Here, God’s love is his covenant love, gracious and faithful (hence, ‘true’). In Jesus Christ that identical grace and mercy, and that identical faithfulness and loyalty, are expressed for all who believe (14, 17).” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Jesus is forever male:** “People tend to view Jesus as one of many intermediaries or emanations from God, but Pastor Bruce Milne reminds us, “*Since he is fully divine, he cannot be reduced to an intermediate state; since he is a person he cannot be dissolved into an idea.*” ...Jesus again appears as the divine logos, one with the Father in divinity (1) and now one with us in humanity (14)... ‘“Flesh” stands for the whole person’; 11 it refers to human existence in its frailty and vulnerability (cf. Is. 40:6: ‘All flesh is grass ...’, RSV). Jesus identified with us to that degree. He made our creaturely weakness his very own form of being (cf. Rom. 8:3: ‘sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man [flesh]’ ...The verb ‘was made’ (egenetō, from ginomai) ‘expresses that a person or thing changes its property and enters into a new condition, becomes something that it was not before’ ...The tense is aorist, implying a definite and completed action; there is no going back upon the incarnation. The act of self-humbling on the part of God is irreversible; he is eternally ‘Emmanuel’, God with us. God the Son, without ceasing for a moment to be divine, has united to himself a full human nature and become an authentic human person.” Pastor Bruce Milne
- **Jesus is our great High Priest:** Hebrews 5:1 explains how the High Priest had to be chosen “from among men” to act on behalf of men. If Jesus had not become human, He would have failed to fulfill the qualifications of the High Priest. He had to be a human for God to accept His sacrifice on humanity’s behalf. In other words, Jesus was the perfect human sacrifice for imperfect humans. Ironically, He became both the Sacrificer and the Sacrifice (propitiation).

### **Articles/Songs/Videos:**

### **Helpful thoughts for discussion leaders:**

1. Go for a single, not a home run...don’t drag the night out; realize more people = less deep sharing.
2. Keep discussion around 30mins. Once you hit the “sweet spot”, spend your time there.

### **Challenge Questions**

*Review the BIG IDEA: Jesus is fully God and fully human.*

**-Simple questions...**What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

### **Preparation questions for John 1:1-5, 14-18.**

- What can be learned about “the Word” in this passage?
- Who is “the Word”? (1:17)
- What does this passage imply about the consistency between the Father and the Son?

### **Application questions from John 1:1-5, 14-18.**

- Can you think of a lie or errant philosophy that could become a starting point for a conversation (with an adult or our children) about Jesus?
- The Word of God is living and active. If the Word lives inside you, then what are some ways your faith could be more active?
- If you don't struggle with the problem of evil, then you've not given it much thought. The issue seems so insurmountable, “*How can a loving God allow such evil to exist?*” How might you tenderly and decisively approach this question through the light of John 1:5?
- Do you believe there are times God doesn't want to be around you? How does the incarnation (God becoming human) change that perspective? How does Jesus being our new representative and head of family change our situation with God? Share how your perspectives of God have changed through learning about Jesus.
- Share some ways you've neglected to see Jesus as fully human. How does it help our faith to recognize that Jesus was a real person living in the real world? How might it help others to see you practicing a real faith during real world experiences instead of being pushed aside in your times of trouble?
- We believe worship in the presence of God and His people is fundamental to understanding and implies Sunday worship is vital, not optional. Do you struggle to prioritize participation in Sunday worship? If so, why? How do you expect people to become worshippers if they are never offered a chance to experience worship with you?
- Who is discipling you in knowing and experiencing God? Who are you discipling? Every Christian should be able to identify a few people who fit these categories. If you can't, please reach out for some advice.

### **Here are some great resources for digging deeper into community group life...**

How life together looks <http://austinstone.org/stories/film/item/140-missional-community-lukes-story>

Rethinking what we do [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player\\_embedded](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvWnXYSELF4&feature=player_embedded)

Numerous articles to provoke thought <http://tod dengstrom.com/archives/>

What groups of 2-3 might look like <http://tod dengstrom.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LTG-Overview.pdf>