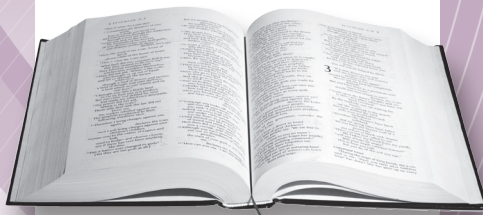


BAPTISTWAY ADULT BIBLE STUDY GUIDE®

The Gospel of John
BELIEVE IN JESUS AND LIVE!

PAM GIBBS
RONNY MARRIOTT
WESLEY SHOTWELL
DIANNE SWAIM



BAPTISTWAYPRESS®
Dallas, Texas

The Gospel of John: Believe in Jesus and Live!—BaptistWay Adult Bible Study Guide®

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How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

- A. Do all of the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might do this in one or more of the following ways:
- B. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on page 9 and on the first page of each lesson.

- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
 - Send your class members a text or e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
 - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org on the Adults—Bible Studies page.
 - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
 - Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
- C. After you've studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- D. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at www.baptistwaypress.org.
- E. Additional Bible study comments on the lessons are available online. Call 1-866-249-1799 or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org to order *Premium Adult Online Bible Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website, www.baptistwaypress.org. The price of these comments for the entire study is \$6 for individuals and \$25 for a group of five. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Adult Online Bible Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org to purchase or for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.
- F. Additional teaching plans are also available in electronic format (PDF) by calling 1-866-249-1799. The price of these additional teaching plans for the entire study is \$5 for an individual and

\$20 for a group of five. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive *Premium Adult Online Teaching Plans* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

- G. You also may want to get the enrichment teaching help that is provided on the Internet by the *Baptist Standard* at www.baptiststandard.com. (Other class participants may find this information helpful, too.) The *Baptist Standard* is available online for an annual subscription rate of \$10. Subscribe online at www.baptiststandard.com or call 214-630-4571. (A free thirty-day trial subscription is currently available.)
- H. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

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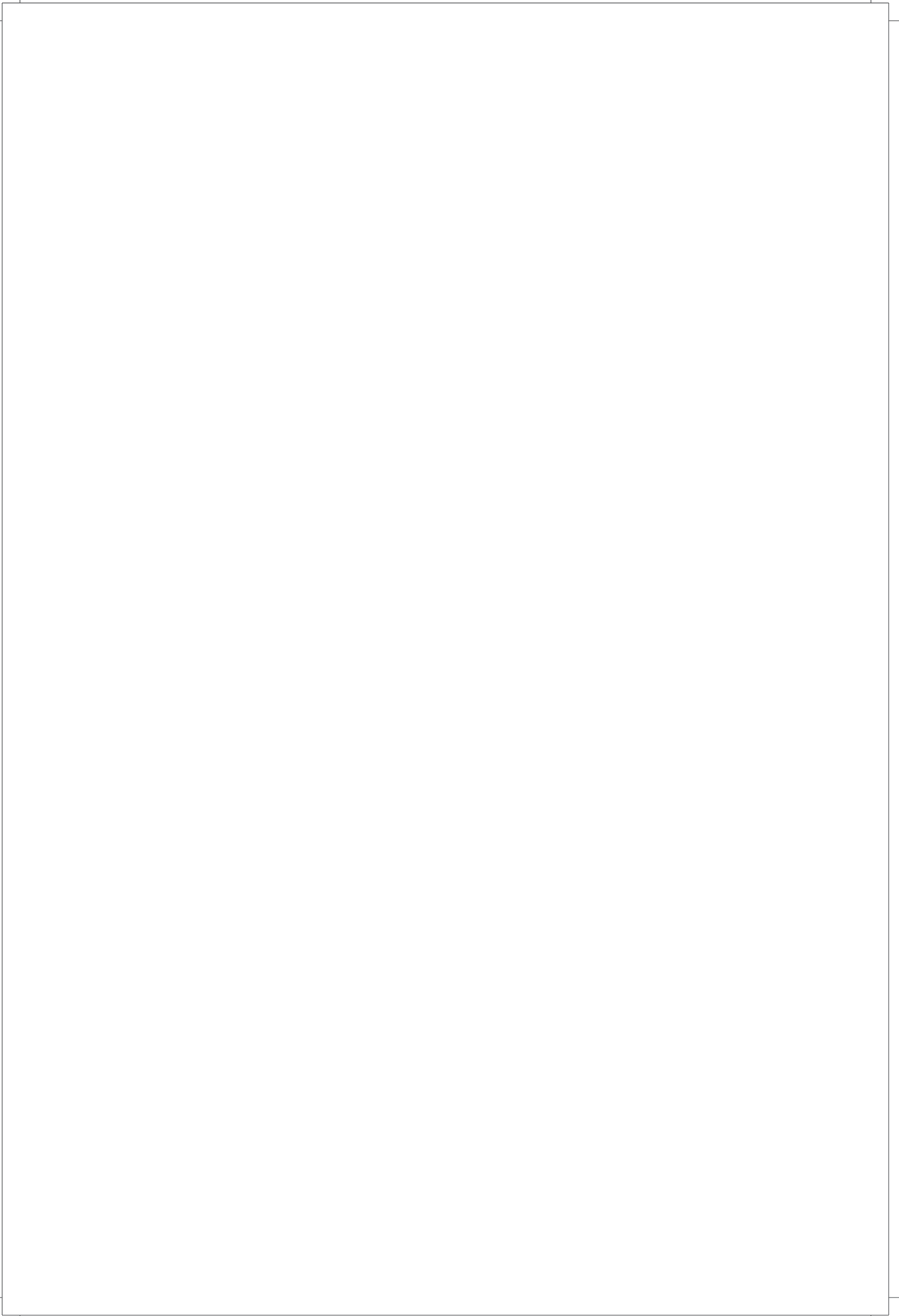
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Introducing

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: Believe in Jesus and Live!

Approaching This Study of the Gospel of John

We live in a skeptical society. Whether the messages we receive come through marketing efforts designed to influence our purchase decisions or explanations from political, entertainment, or religious figures mired in scandal, we are slow to believe. Think about it. What does it require for someone to convince you that their message is true?

The Apostle John wrote his Gospel to convince people to believe in Jesus and live! In fact, he used the Greek word translated “believe” ninety-eight times in his writing.¹ The purpose of his Gospel is summed up in the following verses:

“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30–31).²

The type of belief John writes about is more than mental agreement with a set of facts. It is accepting truth as truth³, but even more importantly, it is placing confidence, faith, and trust in the person who embodies those truths. To believe in Jesus is to accept his words as truth and to place our total dependence on him for our lives, both for time and eternity.

And what sort of life does John write about? John quotes Jesus as follows, “. . . I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). The Greek word translated “life” in this verse refers to life in the spirit and soul, and most often speaks of eternal life.⁴ John wants his readers to know that amazing, abundant, eternal life is available to all who will place their faith and trust in Jesus.

Since the beginning of our BaptistWay Bible study series, we have focused on the Gospel of John three times previously. (This particular study appears in our fourteenth year of publishing ongoing curriculum.) Each of these studies—this one as well as the previous three—is different from the others in its approach to the individual lessons.⁵

We think studying Scriptures directly about Jesus on a regular basis is important, so we provide a study of a Gospel each year. Each study begins with a new emphasis and fresh outlines and lessons are created.

A Little Background on the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John was written in a different manner than the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke.) John did not write an historical account of the life of Jesus but rather a “powerful argument for the incarnation, a conclusive demonstration that Jesus was, and is, the very heaven-sent Son of God, and the only source of eternal life.”⁶ This Gospel is more theological in nature focusing on revelation and redemption. John gave attention to key events in Jesus’ life and ministry, and took time to explain and apply their meaning.

John, the author of this Gospel, was one of the “Sons of Thunder” with his brother James, and a son of Zebedee. He was a rough and tumble fisherman who became one of Jesus’ inner circle of disciples (with James and Peter), and eventually was given the responsibility to care for Jesus’ mother at his crucifixion (John 19:26–27). Scholars place the writing of the Gospel of John somewhere around A.D. 90, with John writing from Ephesus some time after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

This study of the Gospel of John is divided into two areas of focus:

1. Jesus’ Public Ministry—a period of roughly three-and-a-half years that consisted of Jesus preaching, teaching, and performing various miracles.

2. Jesus' Private Ministry—a period of roughly a three-and-a-half days during the Passion week as Jesus spent intimate times of instruction, encouragement, preparation, and comfort with his disciples.⁷

The Gospel of John in Our Day

How should John's Gospel impact Jesus' followers today? We live in a world full of people who are searching for truth and meaning and purpose in life. There are many religions and philosophies available to these seekers. The Gospel of John contains the story of the preexistent Savior of the world who became one of us so that we could enjoy the full and abundant life we were created for. We are called to be an extension of the grace and truth of Christ that the world so desperately needs.

John's Gospel provides proof that can encourage and empower us to truly live and to be ambassadors of the light of Christ. May this study empower and encourage us to proclaim the truth that, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:16–17).

Note: Since the time of the first release of these materials includes the Christmas holiday, a Christmas lesson is included to meet the needs of churches who wish to have an emphasis on Christmas at this time.

UNIT ONE: JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY (3+ YEARS)

Lesson 1	In Him Was Life	John 1:1–18
Lesson 2	You Must Be Born Again	John 3:1–21
Lesson 3	The Bread of Life	John 6:25–51
Lesson 4	The Truth Will Set You Free	John 8:31–47
Lesson 5	Life to the Full	John 10:1–21
Lesson 6	The Resurrection and the Life	John 11:17–44

UNIT TWO: JESUS' PRIVATE MINISTRY (3+ DAYS)

Lesson 7	The Full Extent of His Love	John 13:1–17; 31–38
Lesson 8	The Way, the Truth, and the Life	John 14:1–14

Lesson 9	Apart From Me You Can Do Nothing	John 15:1–17
Lesson 10	It is Finished	John 19:28–42
Lesson 11	Stop Doubting and Believe	John 20:10–31
Lesson 12	Follow Me!	John 21:1–25
Christmas Lesson	Nothing Is Impossible with God	Luke 1:26–45

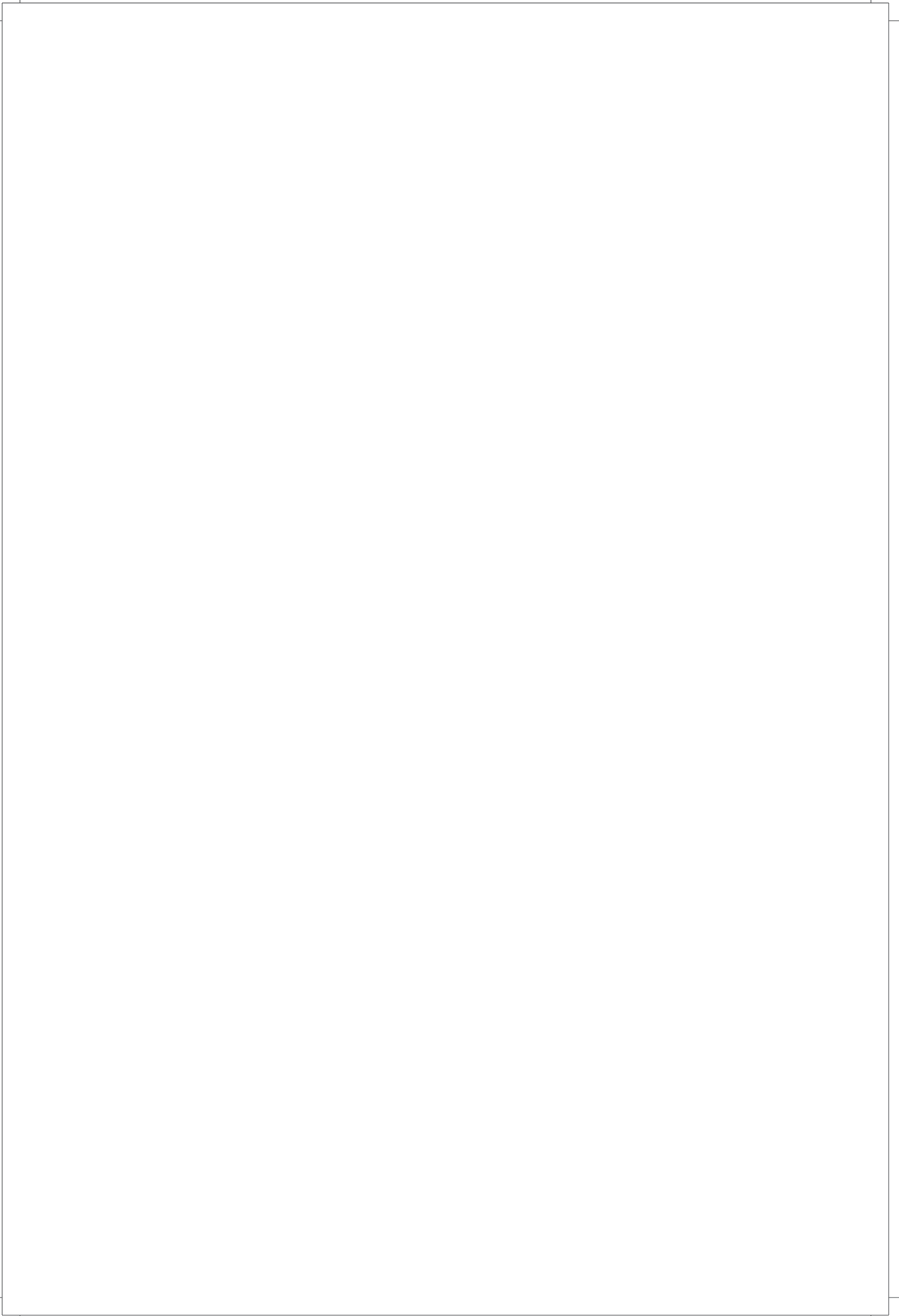
Additional Resources for Studying the Gospel of John⁸

- Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary—Abridged Edition: New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994.
- Bruce Barton, Philip Comfort, Grant Osborne, Linda K. Taylor, and Dave Veerman. *Life Application New Testament Commentary*. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001.
- Gary M. Burge. *John*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000.
- Craig S. Keener. *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- George R. Beasley-Murray. *John*. Volume 36 of Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1989.
- A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament: Concise Edition*. Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 2000.
- Spiros Zodhiates and Warren Baker. *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible, New International Version*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996.
- Charles R. Swindoll. *Insights on John—Swindoll's New Testament Insights*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010.

NOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's New Testament Insights: Insights on John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 17.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in “Introducing The Gospel of John: Believe in Jesus and Live!” are from the New International Version (1984 edition).

3. Swindoll, 17.
4. Spiros Zodhiates and Warren Baker, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 1630.
5. See www.baptistwaypress.org.
6. Bruce Barton, Philip Comfort, Grant Osborne, Linda K. Taylor, and Dave Veerman, *Life Application New Testament Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001), 365.
7. Swindoll, 19.
8. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BAPTISTWAY PRESS® with all of its comments.



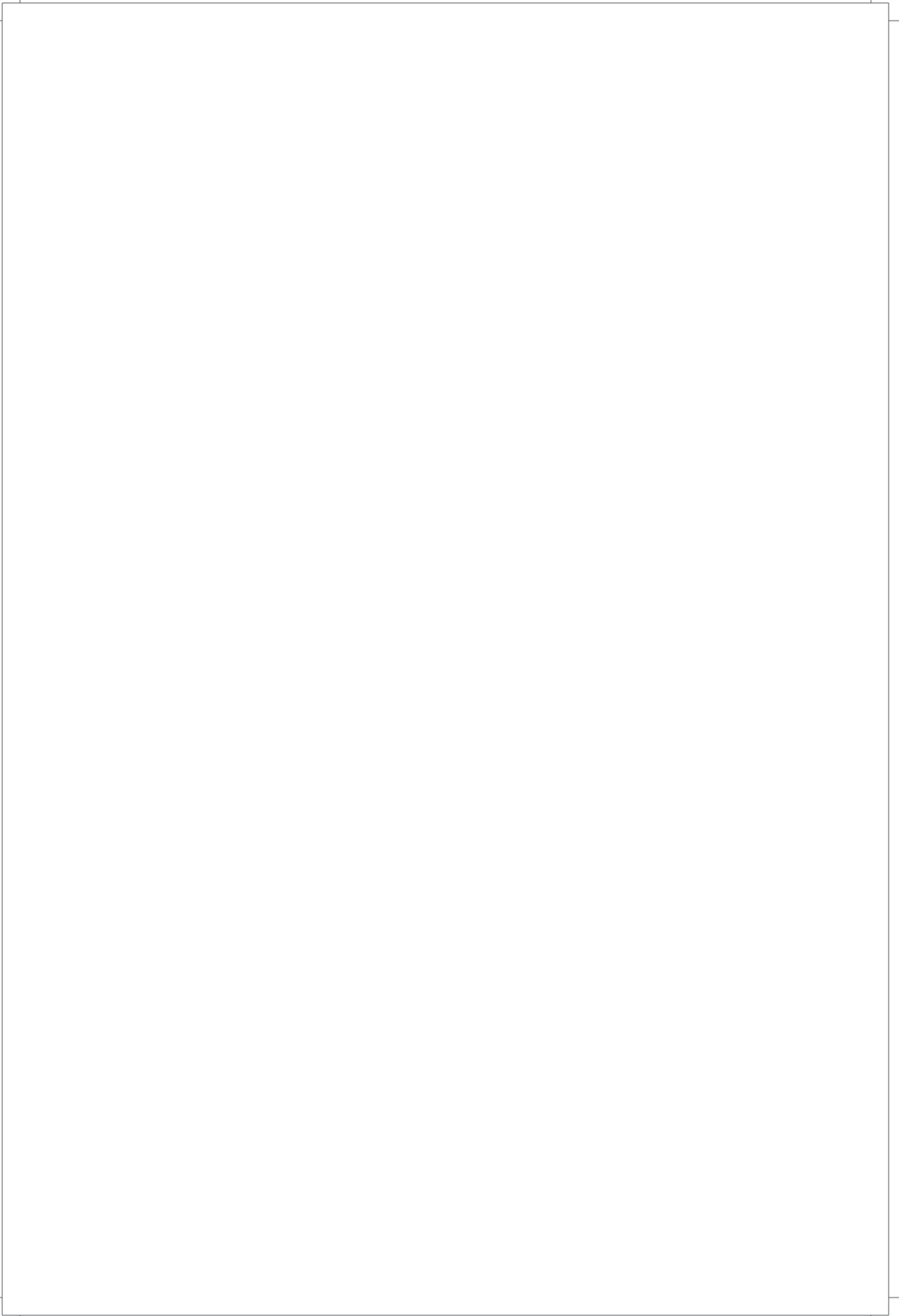
U N I T O N E

Jesus' Public Ministry (3+ Years)

Unit One, "Jesus' Public Ministry" contains six lessons covering events that occurred during Jesus' public ministry. In these lessons we see Jesus preaching, teaching, and performing miracles. Lesson one sets a deep theological tone as John describes the preexistent Savior who became flesh and dwelt among us. Lesson two records Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus as he explained his purpose and the need to be born again. In lesson three Jesus uses the background of his miraculous feeding of the 5,000 to talk about how he can meet our deepest spiritual hunger. Lesson four focuses on how we can be freed from sin to follow God and lesson five speaks about the abundant life that is available in Jesus. Lesson six reveals both Jesus' compassion and his resurrection power!

UNIT ONE: JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY (3+ YEARS)

Lesson 1	In Him Was Life	John 1:1–18
Lesson 2	You Must Be Born Again	John 3:1–21
Lesson 3	The Bread of Life	John 6:25–51
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Lesson 5	Life to the Full	John 10:1–21
Lesson 6	The Resurrection and the Life	John 11:17–44



LESSON ONE

In Him Was Life

FOCAL TEXT

John 1:1–18

BACKGROUND

John 1:1–18

MAIN IDEA

Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is eternal and is the source of eternal life.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

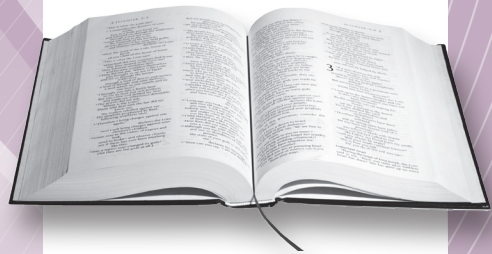
What is Jesus' true identity?

STUDY AIM

To comprehend Jesus' unique identity and to help others recognize him for whom he truly is

QUICK READ

This passage, also known as “The Prologue,” is a summary of the entire Gospel of John. It tells us that God became a living, breathing person (Christ) in order to redeem humanity from its sin.



Introduction

Have you ever eaten a dessert (or even an entrée) that was so good you were disappointed when it was gone? Perhaps a fancy creation from a restaurant left you longing for more. In a way, today's Scripture will leave you with that same feeling. The opening verses of the Book of John are so rich in theology and meaning. Studying it for only a few moments will merely scratch the surface of this powerful proclamation of the gospel. You will long for more.¹

JOHN 1:1–18

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 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

⁶ There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹ The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" ¹⁶ From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

The Beginning of It All (1:1–5)

Notice that the first few words in the Gospel of John parallel the opening words of the book of Genesis. While Genesis focuses on God the Father being present before creation, John 1:1 focuses on the Word (which we find out later is Jesus) being present before creation as well. This verse also equates the Word with God. Verse 2 continues the emphasis of Jesus' preexistence with God. This key truth will play an important role later on as Jesus explains that what he says and does comes from God because he is God. This theme of the intimate relationship between God the Father and God the Son continues on throughout the New Testament (especially in the book of John), even though it remains a mystery to us.

In verse 3, John asserted that not only was Jesus present at creation, but that he created all things. This contradicts the teaching of some religious groups and cults that teach that Jesus was not equal with God, but was the first being created by God. Verse 4 indicates that "life" was found in him. This word is most often connected with describing supernatural life as opposed to biological life, although given the reference to creation in the previous verse the meaning could be taken both ways.

Not only is Jesus the source of life, he is life (John 14:6), and is light as well. Verse 5 tells us that Jesus (as the light) shines in the darkness, which can be understood as a reference to Jesus coming to the earth. He is the light of the world (John 8:12) that even the darkness cannot overcome. The word "overcome" can also mean "comprehend." If understood this way, Jesus was the light directing humanity toward God (and Jesus himself), but the world could not understand (or did not comprehend) his radical message of eternal life through faith and trust in him. Nevertheless, without Jesus we are in darkness, and we are lost.

The darkness of the world can be seen most keenly in today's global events. From fighting within nations and between nations to infanticide and suicide, the world indeed lives in darkness and despair. Yet, there is

still hope. Jesus is the same light now as he was then. The Holy Spirit still draws people to Jesus, and we as his followers are charged with the task of being light as well, drawing attention to the ultimate Light (Matthew 5:14–16).

A Witness to the Light (1:6–9)

In these verses, the focus shifts somewhat from Jesus to the forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist. While these verses do not specifically use the term “the Baptist,” other Scriptures fill in the blanks, so to speak, letting the reader know that John the Baptist and the man named John in verse 6 are the same person.

Verses 7–8 describe John’s purpose—to testify about the light (Christ) so that people would believe in him. These verses make it clear that John the Baptist was not the Messiah, but was rather the “voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord” (John 1:23). He understood his role as a herald who was to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus, “the true light . . . coming into the world” (1:9).

THE TENT OF MEETING (THE TABERNACLE)

When the gospel writer John described Jesus as God who “made his dwelling among us,” he was using a term that would have been readily understood by the Jewish people. It was an allusion to the Tent of Meeting or Tabernacle depicted in the Book of Exodus. The Tent of Meeting was a portable place for the divine presence of God to dwell with his people (Israel) during their exodus from Egypt through the conquering of the land of Canaan. During the exodus and the years in exile, God’s presence was indicated by a pillar of cloud covering the tent’s entrance (Exodus 33:9). Moses often met with God there, as well as others who would inquire of the Lord. It was a place where God would reveal himself to his people. Once the Israelites took up residence in the Promised Land and constructed a permanent tabernacle, God met his people there. When God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, he was dwelling with his people—not in a place, but in a person.

The distinction of John as the forerunner of the Messiah was an important one to make. John the Baptist was a very respected and prominent man at the time, and many people came to hear him preach. Many of his hearers were content to follow him and might have followed John as the Messiah rather than Jesus. Later on in the same chapter, John made clear his subservient role to Jesus when he said, “He [Jesus] is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie” (1:27).

While Christians may not be as radical as John the Baptist in their dress or diet today, they continue John’s mission. We, as Jesus’ followers, are charged with the task of telling others what Christ has done for us, and about the eternal life he offers. Our words and actions should point others toward a relationship with Jesus. The Messiah has indeed come, and we are proclaimers of that truth.

Belonging by Belief, Not Blood (1:10–13)

These verses shift back to a focus on Jesus. Verse 10 repeats verse 3, but then adds an important note: Although Jesus came into the very world he created, the world—specifically the people in the world—did not recognize or acknowledge Jesus. They could not accept him as the promised Messiah. The rejection was not universal, however, because John went on to talk about those who would turn to Christ and receive him. They would become the children of God. This standing as God’s beloved would cause conflict with the religious Jews who claimed to be God’s favored ones (namely, the religious leaders).

In verse 12, the word “believe” means more than mental assent or acknowledgement. It is not a detached stoicism. Rather, to believe is an act of faith and trust that Jesus is all that he claimed he was, and to turn one’s life over to him in submission and obedience. To believe is to put the full weight of your hope and trust in him, not in yourself or anyone else. Verse 13 makes clear that it is through trusting in Christ alone that a person is saved. It is not based on genealogical heritage, which was the prevailing Jewish thought. The real children of God are born of faith, not of blood relationship.

The Jewish people believed they were God’s beloved people by virtue of being descendants of Abraham. They believed this so strongly that

when Jesus came as the true Messiah, they couldn't accept him. His teachings about the need to trust in him offended them, especially when Jesus said he was greater than Moses or Abraham and equated himself with God. Jesus didn't match their preconceived notions of a Messiah, so they rejected him.

Unfortunately, many people today suffer from the same disbelief. Some hold so tightly to their religious upbringing and family history that they think those things are enough to merit their salvation. Others cannot reconcile their preconceived ideas about Jesus with the reality of who he is, so they reject him based on their own ideas about him.

God Wrapped in Human Flesh (1:14–18)

Verse 14 is perhaps one of the most famous in the entire book of John because it summarizes the miracle of the incarnation—that God, in the person of Jesus Christ, wrapped himself in human skin and confined himself inside a frail, human body. God made his home among us, pitched his tent with us, and moved into our neighborhood. Fully divine and fully human, Jesus became both visible and tangible. He became one of us in order to redeem us out of our sinful state. It is a mystery that can never be fully explained.

Because Jesus' incarnation is such a mystery, human beings have tried to explain away one aspect of his being in favor of another. For instance, people called Gnostics believe that Jesus was not really human because human flesh was sinful. Muslims today believe that Jesus was not God incarnate, but rather a servant and messenger from God. Jews equate the worship of Jesus as God to idolatry. Obviously, what one believes about Jesus will shape one's entire belief system.

In verse 15, the gospel writer circled back to the testimony of John the Baptist to confirm Jesus' divinity and humanity. Without fully understanding the implications of his words, John proclaimed that Jesus was greater than he was because Jesus existed before him. Those who knew John and his family history would have known that he and Jesus were cousins, and that he (John) had been physically born *before* Jesus. The only way Jesus could have existed before John would be in his pre-incarnational state as the invisible God.

APPLY THE TRUTH:

To apply the truths of this passage:

- Meditate on ways Jesus' character reflects the character of God.
- Notice how current culture tries to find life outside of Jesus.
- Thank God for the gift of being called a child of God because you believe in Jesus.
- Ask God to show you how to testify to others that Jesus is the light that will pierce the darkness in their lives.
- Watch for ways that Jesus reveals himself to you this week through the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who resides in you as a believer.

The mystery of the incarnation will never fully be understood this side of heaven. However, such limited knowledge should not keep us from believing its reality. Believing in something you cannot completely understand is not so difficult—it happens all the time. I cannot explain nor understand astrophysics, but I can still affirm its reality. I can't explain how gasoline makes an engine run (and I certainly can't explain the inner workings of that engine), but I drive my car almost daily.

Verses 16–17 reiterate the introduction of grace through the incarnation of Christ. Christ was “full of grace and truth” (1:14) and “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (1:17). Moses brought the Law. Jesus embodied grace and truth that would not only fulfill the law but would also make the law no longer necessary in order for someone to enjoy a relationship with God. Through Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection, the sacrificial system in the Old Testament Law would no longer be needed.

Verse 18 closes out this ancient prologue by reminding readers that no one has seen God—not even Moses himself (1:17). Moses could see only a portion of God (Exodus 33:23), lest he die. Yet, in Jesus, the fullness of God is revealed. To know Jesus is to know God. While on earth, Jesus fully embodied the character of God.

Implications and Actions

Recognizing Jesus as God in the flesh, the only One in whom you can trust for salvation, is the most critical decision you will ever make. To believe in him as the Son of God who takes away the sins of the world will change not only your eternal destiny (heaven or hell), but it will also change the trajectory of your life every day. His Spirit will live within you, transforming you into his character as you surrender to him. You will discover that life is indeed found in him alone. The question is whether you will choose to trust in Jesus or if you will try to find life apart from him.

QUESTIONS

1. How have you tried to wrap your mind around the concept of the Trinity, which is alluded to in these opening verses of John? How can God and Jesus be equal, yet different?

5. How did Jesus demonstrate both grace and truth? Which one do you lean towards as you relate to others?

6. What mysteries of the Christian faith do you accept and trust, even though you cannot understand them?

NOTES _____

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–6, 10–12, and the Christmas lesson are from the New International Version (1984 edition).