



Community Group Discussion Guide

December 8, 2024

John 1: 1-5 | The Word with Us

MOTIVATE

⇒ **Starter question: What is one of your personal favorite beginnings?**

Optional activity: As a group, compare and contrast the different ways the four writers begin their respective Gospels. Note that John introduces Jesus at the age of 30 and includes no information about His birth. How does John's introduction of Jesus relate to the traditional Christmas story?

DISCUSS

Each Gospel writer chose a different starting point for their account of Jesus' life. John presented the largest perspective by describing Jesus as the source of everything we understand as "the beginning." The Gospel of John is different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke (the Synoptic Gospels) in that over 90 percent of its material is unique. (See [John Overview](#) for more information.)

John declared the purpose for his writing in John 20:30-31: *Now 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.* In his Gospel, John introduces his audience to Jesus time and time again, and in each case, Jesus is pictured with increasingly profound images.

Rather than focusing on the miracles, parables, and public speeches of Jesus, John emphasized the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to His teachings. While the Synoptic Gospels majored on describing events in the life of Christ, John emphasized the meaning of these events. Starting in John 1:1-5, John opened with an overtly theological prologue that introduces themes which he will elaborate on throughout the rest of his Gospel.

John wrote to build faith and confidence in Jesus so we may believe He truly was and is the eternal Son of God, the divine messenger sent from the Father. John also wanted his readers to understand not only the full deity of Christ but also His full humanity. John wrote amid Gnostic teaching which proposed that Jesus only "seemed" to be human.

⇒ **Why is it important to understand the context of John's Gospel when we study a passage from it? What difference does the context make?**

⇒ **Does a form of Gnostic teaching still exist today?**

John 1:1-2: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.*

By opening his Gospel with the phrase "in the beginning," John paralleled the words of the creation account.

He presented two beginnings, one of physical birth and one of spiritual rebirth—the re-creation of humanity. John also referenced a beginning before "the beginning" in Genesis 1:1, this one a timeless beginning in which the Word existed.

⇒ **Compare and contrast Genesis 1:1-3 with John 1:1-3. What stands out to you?**

Three times in verse 1, John used the phrase "the Word." The Greek word is "logos" and it conveys the idea of beginnings. Consider the meaning of the term *Word* or *logos* to John's first readers:

a. In Hebrew Scripture, the Word was power:

- An agent of creation that “spoke” the world into being.
- The source of God’s message to His people through the prophets.
- God’s law, His standard of holiness.
- Another expression for God. To attribute this title to Jesus would have been blasphemous to Jewish readers.

b. In Greek philosophy, the Word was the principle of reason or the rational mind that governed the world. This logos was resident within people, enabling them to make sense of the universe. However, the term logos is more than reason, more than wisdom personified. The use of the Word to Greeks would indicate that Jesus was the truth, the guiding principle of the universe.

c. In John’s Gospel, the Word is the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Word is a title for Jesus as the communication and revealer of God the Father. Much as our words reveal to others our hearts and minds, so Jesus is God’s “Word” to reveal His heart and mind to us.

⇒ ***How does Jesus fulfill all of these?***

Referring to Jesus as “the Word,” John affirmed three basics of Christian doctrine:

1. The Word was in the beginning: Before there was a beginning, the Word had been. In other words, Jesus co-existed with the Father from the beginning, before creation. He did not “come into being” when He was physically born, because He is eternal. John made an absolute affirmation about the eternal existence of the Word. He did not come into being nor was there ever a time when the Word was not.

⇒ ***How is the Word proof that God is intent on communicating with us about Himself?***

2. The Word was in the beginning with God: John used a Greek phrase meaning “toward,” which implies a face-to-face relationship. For all of eternity the Word (the Son) and God (the Father) enjoyed an intimate and personal relationship. In doing this, John was already teaching plurality of the Godhead.

⇒ ***Why would this be significant to John’s Jewish readers?***

3. The Word was God: Not only was the Son with God, but He was also Himself God. The term designates a Person, distinct from and yet co-eternal and identical in essence with God. Jesus is true deity. His being, His essence, His very nature is one with God. Although Jesus took upon Himself full humanity and lived as a man, He never ceased to be the eternal God who has always existed, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the source of eternal life. Whatever we can say about God, we can say about the Word. The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God. The divinity possessed by God is also possessed by this Word.

⇒ ***How do these Christian doctrines make our faith unique?***

⇒ ***Which of these doctrines is the most challenging to you?***

⇒ ***Why are these essential to our faith?***

John did not identify Jesus immediately, but described His nature and purpose before revealing His name. As the Word, Jesus fully conveys and communicates God. He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:5), the express image of God’s substance (Hebrews 1:3), the revealer of God, and the reality of God. As the Word, Jesus is how we can know God intimately and personally.

⇒ ***How did Jesus’ coming make Him accessible to us?***

⇒ ***How has Jesus made God known to you?***

John 1:3: All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In verses 1-2, John states that Jesus is the eternal Word. Here, He is the creative Word. 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 1:1-2 all describe Jesus as the agent of creation, responsible for the formation of our world. When He created, He made something from nothing. Everything came into being through Him and ultimately depends on Him. “Was made” is in the perfect tense in the Greek, which means a “completed act.” Creation is a finished product.

Creation is also a foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. Our theology rests upon our understanding of God as the origin of life and of the role of Jesus Christ in His personal creative attributes. Jesus could not have been created for He created all things. There was a “historical Jesus,” but this terminology refers only to His 33 years on earth. His life had no beginning, and it will have no end.

- ⇒ ***Why is Jesus’ role in creation a foundational doctrine of our faith?***
- ⇒ ***How do you explain this foundational doctrine to someone who is just discovering Jesus?***

John 1:4-5 *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.*

Christ is God once more at work, disclosing Himself to His creation by taking human form to give exhaustive and certain revelation of who He is. In the Word, God’s person and power were revealed to humanity. Creation receives life from the Word—for He is the source of life. This life is eternal and serves as the light for all people, leading them to redemption.

Genesis 1:1-3 reads: *1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.* A quick survey of these verses shows that:

- God created simply by speaking (Psalm 33:6: By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.)
- God created by means of His Word which brought the universe into orderly existence.
- God’s first evidence of His creative work was light.
- God is always the source of life and light. He is Life-Giver and Light-Bearer.

John saw that the same agent of God who created the universe was at work in a new creation inaugurated by Jesus’ coming in the flesh. His entry into our world caused light to shine in the darkness and brought the possibility for the re-creation of men and women.

Jesus came to the world with a message of hope. Despite the world’s hostile condition, God still loves the world and entered it in order to save it. Despite the rejection of humanity, God still empowers men and women to be transformed and become His children. Despite darkness’ continued efforts to overcome and reject the light, it cannot. The light still shines, bringing understanding, spiritual vision, and eternal life.

When Christ’s light shines, we see our sin and His glory. We can refuse to see the light and remain in darkness. But whoever responds will be enlightened by Christ. He will fill our minds with God’s thoughts. He will guide our path and give us God’s perspective. He will shine in our dark world and drive out the darkness of sin with the brilliance of truth.

- ⇒ ***Discuss this quote: Jesus the Creator provides physical life; Jesus the Redeemer provides spiritual life; Jesus the Savior provides eternal life.***
- ⇒ ***How was Jesus unlike anything the world had witnessed before Him?***

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: John wrote about Jesus as fully God and fully human. Although Jesus took upon Himself full humanity and entered history with the limitations of a human being, He never ceased to be the eternal God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the source of everlasting life.

Jesus, the Word, is eternal and personal. He is the heart and core of the Gospel. Everything centers on Him.

- ⇒ ***Discuss this quote: Jesus was God Himself—taking on the clothing of humanity, embracing it fully, walking in it, speaking through it, and delivering the reality of God to the world in a manner never done before. When God takes this kind of initiative, new possibilities are born. Divine power is released onto the broken world and new life is possible. Jesus is our only hope. –Unknown***
- ⇒ ***Which of these essential truths is the most meaningful to you today?***
 - ***Jesus existed before the creation of the world.***
 - ***Jesus spoke our world into existence.***
 - ***Jesus is proof that God is intent on communicating with us about Himself.***
- ⇒ ***What have you done with the life and light God has offered to you through His Son?***

2. Pray: Praise God for sending Jesus to our world. Praise Jesus for being sacrificially intent on bringing us to His Father. Praise the Holy Spirit for His revelation of the truth of God's Word. Thank God for your own re-creation. Ask Him to light up your Christmas season with the glory of His love.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Be Alive: Get to Know the Savior, John 1-12*, by Warren W. Wiersbe, pages 19-24.
- *Holman New Testament Commentary, John*, pages 6-10, 21-22.
- *Life Application Bible Commentary, John*, pages 1-6.
- *The NIV Application Commentary, John*, pages 51-67.
- *Shepherd's Notes, John*, pages 1-12.