



John 1-11

Son of God

Sample Lesson #1
and
Leader's Guide Answers

Read: John 1:1–18, other Scripture references as indicated.

John 1:1–18 forms the introduction (or prologue) to the fourth gospel. In this passage the apostle John introduces us to a number of key words and phrases that dominate the remainder of the book: *witness, Word, life, light, darkness, belief, and truth.*

It is here that we're also introduced to another John. John the Baptist was a transitional figure between the Old and New Testaments and a mighty witness for Christ. Like the Old Testament prophets before him, John the Baptist preached a powerful message of repentance. Like the New Testament apostles and prophets, he bore witness to Jesus as the promised Messiah and the sinless Son of God.

Before you begin, please ask God to reveal Himself through His Word and to give you grace to accept the truths you will be learning.

1. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke begin with a bold declaration that Jesus is God, but John's gospel begins with a powerful theological statement in the form of a riddle. Rather than simply telling us who Jesus is, John invites his readers to discover Jesus' true identity for themselves.
 - a. What *do you think* are the three most common opinions about who Jesus Christ was or is?
 - b. Who *do you think* Jesus was or is, and why?
2. If you are somewhat familiar with the Bible, likely you realize that the first words of John 1:1 (**In the beginning was the Word**) are similar to the first words in the Bible (Genesis 1:1, **In the beginning God**).
 - a. Genesis 1 describes the new *physical creation*; John's gospel describes the new *spiritual* creation (life in Christ). In both verses the phrase **in the beginning** refers to the same event. To what event or time *do you think* it refers?
 - b. John 1:1 says **In the beginning was**, not "in the beginning *is*." What or who was in existence before "the beginning" (Genesis 1:1–2; John 1:1)?
3. Use of the term *Word* in John 1:1 may seem strange to you. To Greeks (non-Jews or Gentiles), *word* meant not only the spoken word but also the thought (or reasoning of the mind) before the words were spoken. To the Hebrews, *Word* meant God's revelation to man (cf. Genesis 15:1, **The Word of the Lord came to Abram**). John's use of the term *Word* (John 1:1, Gk. *logos*) was uniquely powerful, meaning "ultimate reason" to the Greeks and "ultimate revelation" (from God) to the Jews.
 - a. To this point in our study the true identity of the **Word** has not been disclosed. List at least four important truths the Bible teaches about the **Word** (John 1:1–3).
 - b. Which words and phrases are used to emphasize that all creation is the direct result of the Word's creative power, rather than evolution or a by-product of chance such as the "Big Bang" theory (John 1:3, 10; Colossians 1:16)?
4. The best commentary (or interpretative aid) on the Bible is the Bible itself. Use the following verses to determine the exact identity of the **Word** in John 1:1–3, and support your interpretation with specific verse references (John 1:1, 2, 14, 17).

5. What *do you think* is the meaning of the phrase **In Him was life** (John 1:4)?

6. Some Christians don't seem to believe that **the light shines in the darkness** (John 1:5). Rather than believing that God's light (truth) overcomes the darkness (sin) of this world, they live and speak as if the darkness is an unstoppable force that irresistibly overwhelms the light of God's truth. If Christians don't grasp the truth of God's power over sin, they could be tempted to (1) withdraw from the world (isolation), (2) allow themselves to be assimilated into the world (worldliness), or (3) live in defeat and complain about the advancement of wickedness in society (including state schools and government).
 - a. If you are a Christian, do you truly believe that the light (of Christ) shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it (Holman Christian Standard Bible), or do you believe the darkness overcomes the light?

 - b. Are you living in spiritual defeat, overcome by fear and forsaking biblical responsibilities to be a witness for Christ? Or are you living in the light, experiencing victory in Christ and boldly spreading the message of Christ to those in spiritual darkness?

 - c. What specific things could you do to let Christ's light shine through you more brightly at home ... at work... in your church ... in your community?

7. John the Baptist was a mighty servant of God. Jesus said, **among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist** (Luke 7:28).
 - a. What was the sole purpose of John the Baptist's life (John 1:6–8)?

 - b. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9–11), He commanded His followers to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). In what way do you think John the Baptist's ministry and a New Testament Christian's ministry are similar?

8.
 - a. Jesus came into the world He created (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16), but those He created rejected Him (John 1:10–11). On what basis does a person become a child of God (John 1:12–13)?

 - b. List three common misconceptions (false beliefs that are unacceptable to God [John 1:13]) many people believe about how they can enter heaven.

9. Most Christians tend to live lives that are either truth-based or grace-based. Those who conduct themselves strictly based on truth often lack grace in their lives. Those who rely heavily on grace often lack the spiritual courage to stand up for the truth. Jesus, however, was **full of grace and truth** (John 1:14, emphasis added). What do you think that means?

1: Is Jesus Really God?

1.
 - a. Answers will vary. The most common opinions regarding Jesus' identity are: (1) He was a prophet of God akin to Old Testament prophets. (2) A messenger of God, but not divine. (3) He is the sinless Son of God, the Savior of the world (evangelical position). (4) He was a powerful (human) teacher of morality and spirituality who showed man how to live in harmony with others. Other answers could apply.
 - b. Answers will vary.
2.
 - a. The phrase refers to the beginning of the time, space, and matter continuum.
 - b. Only the Godhead—the Father, the Son (Word), and the Holy Spirit (Spirit of God).
3.
 - a.
 1. The Word existed in the beginning before anything else existed except God (John 1:1–2).
 2. The Word was distinct from God (the Father) (John 1:1).
 3. The Word is a person (“He”) as distinct from a divine light (New Age), cosmic energy or principle.
 4. The Word was in union with God the Father (John 1:1).
 5. The Word was God yet distinct from God the Father (John 1:1).
 6. The entire heavens and earth were made by the Word (John 1:3).
 - b.
 1. All things (John 1:3). 2. Without Him nothing was made (John 1:3). 3. By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth (Col. 1:16). 4. All things were created through Him and for Him (Col. 1:16).
4. The Word is identified as the preexistent Creator God (John 1:1–2). This Word became human (flesh) and dwelt among man on the earth (John 1:14). People beheld His glory—a unique glory that came from God the Father and was only given to the Word (John 1:14). This individual, known only as the Word, also was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). In John 1:17, the One who gave us grace and truth is singularly identified as Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Word.
5. The initial thought may be to see “life” as the physical life God gives man, because the preceding text identifies Jesus as the Creator of all things. This “life,” however, was the light of men (John 1:4), which some did not comprehend or accept (John 1:5). Therefore, it is best to understand “life” as the fullness of God's essence, His glorious attributes: holiness, truth, love, omnipotence, sovereignty (William Hendrikson). This “life” includes the physical life Christ gives us, but it also goes far beyond to include all that God originally intended for us in the Garden. This “life,” only from Christ and appropriated by man through the gift of salvation, moves man from mere human existence to the abundant life God intended (John 10:10).
6.
 - a. Answers will vary.
 - b. Answers will vary.
 - c. Answers will vary.
7.
 - a. John's life was to be a witness, to bear witness to the Light, so that through him (John) everyone might believe (John 1:7). John's life purpose pointed others to Christ and to point others away from himself.
 - b. John the Baptist's ministry and Christ's call upon the New Testament Christian are remarkably similar. Both men were called to be witnesses and to testify to others that Jesus is the Christ. Both were called to be a voice crying in the wilderness (for John, it was a physical wilderness; for Christians, it is the world that rejects Christ). John sacrificed his life for the advancement of Christ's ministry, and Christians are called to offer their lives as living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1).
8.
 - a. Individuals become God's children when they receive Jesus Christ by faith, which means believing in His name (His power to save them, John 1:12). They are born of God, which means He gives them life as a sovereign act of His grace apart from works (John 1:13).
 - b.
 1. New birth doesn't come from natural/physical descent or parentage (not of bloods, John 1:13).
 2. The new birth does not come from fallen humans' desire or effort. The new birth cannot be accomplished by man's sinful efforts (however noble they are) because it was man's sinful nature that made it necessary for Christ to die.
 3. The new birth does not come from the husband's desire. In John 1:13, the Greek word for “man” often is translated “husband,” which is not the same word as in John 1:6. Perhaps a second interpretation of this third disqualifying means of salvation could be “not of human volition whatsoever.” The Jews held that because of their “fathers” (their great ancestors) God was obliged to redeem them.
9. Jesus was not part truth and part grace; He was the full embodiment of grace and truth and always conducted Himself in a perfect balance of both. What a powerful example for believers to follow!