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# Introduction

Do you ever wish you could just sit down with Jesus and have a conversation with Him? Has the thought ever crossed your mind? In conversations we exchange ideas, thoughts, knowledge, and information. We form and strengthen relationships. And while you may not be able to talk with Jesus face-to-face, you can still get to know Him from the documented conversations He had with real people while He walked the earth.

That's what this Bible study through the gospel of John is designed to do. As you read what the apostle John recorded about Jesus' life and words (based on John's firsthand experience), you will discover exactly who Jesus is and why He came to earth. You'll witness the power of His miracles. You will watch as crowds of people throng to Him. You'll also see many viciously attack and slander Him. You'll experience the passion of His life and His death. And finally, you will behold as Jesus—unlike any other man ever to set foot on the earth—conquers death by resurrection.

Ultimately, it is Jesus' resurrection that makes it possible for you to actually have real conversations with Him, even today. You see, He is alive. And as you will discover by studying His words, He wants to have an intimate relationship with you.

## **Tips for Studying *Conversations with Jesus***

- #1 Though the Bible texts are printed in this study, you will benefit most by having your Bible opened to these passages so you can get the context and see it for yourself.
- #2 Some Bibles print the words of Jesus in red. If yours does, you'll see that the majority of the gospel of John records back-and-forth conversations between Jesus and the people He met—red words interspersed with black words. We know Jesus as a great teacher, but He was also a great listener. Observe how He responds to the thoughts and sometimes misconceptions of others.
- #3 Jesus was a master of the art of conversations. One of the things that made Him so effective was His ability to ask powerful questions. Notice the questions Jesus asks and to whom He is speaking when He asks them.

#4 As you study, ask God's Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth. Don't expect an audible voice, but a growing awareness of what is true. You may even sense a tugging or a squeezing in your heart. That is the Lord!

With these tips in mind, let's answer a few questions as we prepare to dive into our study.

### **Who?**

The gospel of John—or, as it is formally titled, the Gospel According to John—is filled with intimate observations of the life of Jesus by one of His closest earthly companions. Its author, the apostle John, was one of Jesus' twelve disciples. In a display of humility, John never mentioned his own name in the book. However, being an inner circle eyewitness, he did include himself in several of the events, referring to himself as “the other disciple” (18:16; 20:2–4, 8) or “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (21:7, 20). See if you can identify him as you study his book.

### **When?**

John was the youngest of Jesus' disciples and probably wrote his account when he was an old man, most likely around AD 90. The Bible's three other accounts of the life of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), also known as the Synoptic Gospels, were in wide circulation by the time John wrote his book. He seemed to assume that his readers would be familiar with these other accounts.

### **What?**

Ninety percent of the gospel of John is not found in the Synoptics. While the Synoptic Gospels are three unique perspectives aimed at differing audiences and meant to fulfill different purposes, for the most part each recounts the same basic events and teachings from Jesus' life. John appeared to be filling in the gaps of what had not already been written about Jesus' earthly ministry. It has been said that the book of John completes the Gospels like the second of two pieces of broken pottery: they fit each other perfectly.

## Why?

John's gospel has more discourse than narrative compared to the other gospels. That's why this Bible study is called *Conversations with Jesus*. John wanted us to meet Jesus through His own words.

John's gospel includes a prologue and an epilogue. In the prologue John makes several assertions about Jesus and then demonstrates the truth of those assertions throughout the rest of the book. He does this by introducing the reader to the real Jesus as someone who knew Him personally. Just before the epilogue John tells us why he felt the need to write the fourth gospel.

1. What were John's two purposes for writing this book?

John 20:30–31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but <sup>a</sup> these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, <sup>b</sup> and that by believing you may have life in his name.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

John used the Greek verb *to believe*\* over eighty times in this book.\* The purpose and theme of the gospel of John is to help us *believe that Jesus is God*, come to earth in human flesh to give Himself in exchange for sinners so that we might *have eternal life* with Him.

\*The Old Testament of the Bible was written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the New Testament was written in Greek.

## How?

Before we jump into the study of John's gospel, let's look at a few verses that show us how the Bible was written.

2. How did the Bible come to us?

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

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### 3. How did the human authors produce the words of the Bible?

2 Peter 1:21 No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

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The Bible is unlike any other book in that it claims to be the inspired and completely accurate words of God, given to us through human authors (John 17:17). In its pages, God has revealed Himself to us so we can know Him personally. No other religious text can make that claim.

### 4. How do humans come to faith in God?

Romans 10:17 Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

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As we study the Bible, God supernaturally uses His inspired words to bring us to faith.

## Part 1

# Meeting Jesus: The Person

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## John 1–4

### Audience: Seekers

The gospel of John is divided into three parts based on the content and the audience to whom Jesus was speaking. In part 1 Jesus calls His first disciples to follow Him, and He has two prolonged conversations with those we might call “seekers.” These were people who genuinely wanted to know truth and were brought face-to-face with *the* Truth, whose name is Jesus.



## Conversation #1:

# Jesus' Introductions (John 1-2)

### John 1:1-18: Jesus Is Introduced by John's Prologue

John began his account of the life of Jesus by making several Christ-claims about Jesus. The word *Christ* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Messiah*. Both of these terms carry the idea of someone who is anointed for God's purposes. In his prologue, John plainly referred to Jesus as "Christ" (1:17). Later on, he would write, "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31). Our goal in studying John's prologue is to observe and understand these and other Christ-claims that we will encounter. It's okay to have reservations about them at this point. May I suggest you do two things before you begin?

- #1 Open your heart and mind to what John has laid out in his book. This is as simple as pausing right now to pray and ask God to reveal Himself to you as you study His Word. Whether you pray often or have never done so before, prayer is just talking to God from your heart. If you were going to talk to God right now, what would you tell Him?

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- #2 Open your Bible and read John 1:1-18. This Bible study is designed to let you meet the real Jesus by hearing His own words and seeing His life directly from His Word.

### **Jesus Is the Word**

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was



the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

1. What word did John use to describe Jesus, and who did he say Jesus is?

John 1:1 In the beginning was the <sup>a</sup> Word, and the Word was with God, and <sup>b</sup> the Word was God.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

*Word* is the English translation of the Greek word *logos* and means “a communication whereby the mind finds expression” (from *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*<sup>1</sup>). It often denotes a complete message as opposed to a single word. From this passage, we see that Jesus is God communicated to humans. In sending Jesus to the earth, God stooped to meet our human need.

The words of John 1:1 seem to mirror the beginning of the Bible to show Jesus’ preexistent relationship with God and creation.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

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

The word translated *was* is the Greek equivalent of the name God used for Himself before the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt. Just as God, the Deliverer, freed the Israelites from slavery to Egypt, so Jesus the Deliverer would free people from slavery to sin.

Exodus 3:13–14 Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “*I AM WHO I AM.*” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘*I AM* has sent me to you.’”

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1. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker, s.v. “λόγος, ου, ό” (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 598–99.

Names carry great significance throughout the Bible. The English name *Jehovah* is a transliteration\* of the Hebrew word translated *I AM* in this passage. It refers to the eternal nature of God and is one of the most sacred names of God in the Bible. In John 1:1 the verb *was* referring to Jesus is its Greek equivalent. Jesus used this Greek equivalent of *Jehovah* fourteen times to describe Himself in this book. This verb referring to Jesus (1:1) comes from the root word meaning “to be.” Contrast this with the verb used to describe John the Baptist in verse 6, which means “to become.” Jesus *is*. John *became*. Add to that understanding another layer when in verse 14 John says that Jesus *became flesh*. The One who always is and has been became a man. Wow!

\*The translators used the sounds of the Hebrew letters to create the English word.

As you can see, there is a lot of truth packed into this one verse, but here are three important Christ-claims we can easily identify:

- #1 The preexistent eternality of Jesus—Jesus existed before time and is eternal.
- #2 The deity of Jesus—Jesus is God.
- #3 The distinct person of Jesus—though Jesus is God, He is distinct from God the Father.

2. Are any of these claims new to you or difficult for you to believe? Which one(s)?

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John wrote these truths as facts and didn’t try to explain or defend them at this point, but remember: he wrote the book to help us believe that what he was saying is true.

3. What did John claim Jesus did in the beginning with God?

John 1:2–3 He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

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#### 4. What is inherently true about Jesus?

| John 1:4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

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This inherent life, along with the name *I AM*, points to the self-existence of God. Jesus could create because He exists independently of all other beings and causes. He has life in Himself. As the self-existent One, He is eternal, unchanging, and distinct from all that He has created. John tells us that Jesus communicates His life to humans through the concept of light.

| John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

#### 5. What happens to darkness when you turn on the lights in a dark room?

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The darkness in this world definitely opposed Jesus; but as you study, you will see that darkness did not win.

John made four more Christ-claims in verses 2–5. Once again, at this point he was not attempting to defend or prove any of these claims. In his prologue, John was simply “setting the table” for his readers.

#4 Jesus is cocreator with God the Father.

#5 Jesus is self-existent.

#6 Jesus came to communicate life to humans.

#7 Jesus will be opposed, but He cannot be defeated.

John gave us a summary narrative of what he would record in his gospel before concluding the prologue with more Christ-claims.

#### **Jesus Is Light**

| John 1:6–8 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

6. Who sent John the Baptist, and why?

John 1:6–7 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

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God sent a man named John to prepare the way for Jesus' coming. This is a different person from John the author of the book. We call him John the Baptist because he preached a message of repentance of sin, and people responded by being baptized in water. Even though Jesus, the true light, was coming into the world, few were going to receive Him. Those who did receive Jesus became God's children and now relate to God as a Father and not as an enemy.

***Jesus Is Rejected***

John 1:9–13 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

7. How was Jesus received when He entered this world?

John 1:10–11 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

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8. What happens to those who do receive Jesus by believing He is who He claims to be?

John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

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9. What kind of birth is necessary to become a child of God?

John 1:13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

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The contrast between the eternal, spiritual realm and the temporal, physical world is a theme that runs through the gospel of John. We tend to focus on the physical, those things we can see with our eyes, but Jesus consistently calls us to see and value the spiritual.

### **Jesus Is God in Flesh**

John 1:14–18 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (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.’”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

10. What did the preexistent, eternal, self-existent Word become?

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

---

When Jesus became a human, He was still *the Word*, and all the Christ-claims John made concerning Him are still true about Him. Jesus is the unique God-man. Later in this chapter we will see that Jesus often referred to Himself as the Son of Man (see, for example, John 1:51 and John 3:13), knowing Himself to be God who became a man. John said he had observed God’s glory in Jesus, and he called Him God’s only Son.

11. What do you think “grace upon grace” means in the following passage?

John 1:16–17 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

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The words could be translated “grace replacing grace,” showing that abundant, amazing grace is available from Jesus for all to receive.

The law given by Moses reflects the true holiness of God. When we break God’s law, it is far more than simply breaking a rule; we offend God’s holy nature. The truth is, sin separates us from God. Here are a few of God’s laws, recorded in the Old Testament book of Exodus:

- “You shall have no other gods before me” (20:3). (“Other gods” can mean anything that is more important to you than the one true God.)
- “You shall not commit adultery” (20:14).
- “You shall not steal” (20:15).
- “You shall not bear false witness” (20:16). To “bear false witness” means to lie.

Have you broken any of these laws? \_\_\_\_\_  
If you answered yes, you need grace.

12. Has anyone ever perfectly kept God’s law?

Romans 3:23 All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

---

13. God used Moses to give us the truth of His law. What did Jesus bring into this world?

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

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Jesus suffered the same human weaknesses and temptations that all humans face, but He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). As God in flesh, He is perfectly holy and brought truth into the world by perfectly fulfilling

the Law (Matthew 5:17). Jesus as the sinless Son of God was uniquely qualified to provide grace for us.

Here are three more important Christ-claims in this section of John:

#8 Jesus, the divine Word, became a human. He is 100 percent God and 100 percent human.

#9 Jesus came to manifest the glory of God on earth. Though all other humans are sinners and come short of the glory of God, Jesus Himself never sinned. He displayed the glory of God.

#10 *Grace* and *truth* come together in Jesus. He is the Truth, and in Grace He gave His perfect life in exchange for our sinful lives so that we might be reconciled to God.

14. The following verse sums up John's prologue. Based on this verse, ultimately, why did Jesus come to earth and become a human?

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

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Pastor and author David Platt tells a story that illustrates the truth from this verse. He was engaged in a conversation with a Buddhist leader and a Muslim leader who were discussing how they felt all religions are fundamentally the same. Platt said:

I listened for a while, and then they asked me what I thought. "It sounds as though you both picture God (or whatever you call god) at the top of a mountain. It seems as if you believe that we are all at the bottom of the mountain, and I may take one route up the mountain, you may take another, and in the end we will all end up in the same place."

They smiled as I spoke. Happily they replied, "Exactly! You understand!" Then I leaned in and said, "Now let me ask you a question. What would you think if I told you that the God at the top of the mountain actually came down to where we are? What would you think if I told you that God doesn't wait for people to find their way to him, but instead he comes to us?"

They thought for a moment and then responded, "That would be great."

I replied, "Let me introduce you to Jesus."

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<sup>2</sup>David Platt, *Radical* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2010), 33.

## John 1:19–34: Jesus Is Introduced by John the Baptist

### *John the Baptist Introduces Himself*

John 1:19–28 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”<sup>3</sup>

(Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. (See Isaiah 40:3).

15. Why do you think John the Baptist answered the priests and Levites the way he did?

John 1:19–20 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

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John often used the term “the Jews” to refer to the religious leaders in Jerusalem, the capital city of the Jewish people. These leaders must have heard rumors that John the Baptist was the Messiah. He wanted to be very clear that he was not the Messiah or even the focus of attention.

16. What was John the Baptist’s role?

John 1:23 He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”



John quoted a messianic prophecy from Isaiah 40 to point to two distinct truths:

#1 John considered himself the forerunner of the promised Messiah. His role was to pave the way for Him.

#2 This promised Messiah is “the Lord.” The word used in Isaiah 40:3 for *LORD* is the Hebrew word transliterated *Jehovah*, the sacred name for God.

### **John the Baptist Introduces Jesus**

John 1:29–34 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

17. When John the Baptist introduced Jesus, what did he call Him and what did he say He had come to do?

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the <sup>a</sup>Lamb of God, <sup>b</sup>who takes away the sin of the world!”

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

John is the only human author in the Bible who uses the title “the Lamb of God” for Jesus. In the four books he wrote, John refers to Jesus as the Lamb over thirty times. It is a reference to the Passover lamb, first mentioned in Exodus 12. At the opening of the book of Exodus, the Israelites had been enslaved under Pharaoh in Egypt for hundreds of years, so God sent Moses to command that Pharaoh release God’s people. When Pharaoh refused to set them free, God sent ten plagues to force Pharaoh’s hand. The tenth and worst plague was the death of every firstborn son in Egypt, both human and animal. To protect the Israelites, God instructed

them to sacrifice a lamb and put some of the blood on the doorframes of their homes.

18. What did God say would happen if the Israelites believed what He said and obeyed His instructions?

Exodus 12:13 “The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.”

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The word *Passover* comes from God’s promise to spare the firstborn of all who believed and obeyed. God instituted an annual remembrance called the Passover Feast, when each family was to kill and eat a lamb to commemorate their deliverance from Egyptian slavery. When John the Baptist called Jesus the Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29), he was likening Jesus to that Passover lamb. All of the Old Testament sacrifices ultimately pointed to Jesus the Messiah, the One who can take away sin. The Bible teaches that salvation from sin is a divine act that demands a human response (Romans 10:9; Ephesians 2:8–9).

19. How did John the Baptist know that Jesus was the Son of God?

John 1:32–34 And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

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God used a sign to help John recognize Jesus. He saw the Spirit of God descend and rest on Him. Up to this point, John had helped people demonstrate their repentance of sin by baptizing them with water; but from this point on, Jesus, as the Son of God, would baptize people with the Holy Spirit. This spiritual baptism is an inner cleansing by God Himself.

*This is a good place to divide this lesson  
if you choose to study it in two sittings instead of one.*

## John 1:35–2:25: Jesus Is Introduced by His First Actions

### Jesus' First Disciples

John 1:35–42 The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

Verse 35 begins the third day of the book of John’s narrative. John the Baptist first introduced Jesus to a crowd. The next day, when John was alone with two of his disciples, he directed them to Jesus by again calling Him the Lamb of God. One of these two disciples was probably John, the author of this gospel. The other was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. At John the Baptist’s prompting, these two men left him and began to follow Jesus.

20. If John the Baptist was already teaching the importance of repentance, why do you think John’s disciples left him to follow Jesus?

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Being sorry for your sins, confessing them, and even denouncing them are not enough. The unfortunate fact of the matter is that you will inevitably sin again. Repentance deals with only one-half of the problem of sin. Jesus came as *the Lamb of God* to *take away* sin, and in the process of taking it away, He also put something in its place. As we will see, Jesus *exchanges your sin for His righteousness*.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

21. What are the first words of Jesus recorded in the gospel of John?

John 1:38a Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?”

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What a powerful question! It really hits to the heart of life. May I suggest you contemplate that question for a while? The answer will tell you a lot about your life. The deeper you go into the question, “What am I seeking?” the more you’ll realize that *only Jesus satisfies*.

If Jesus were here with you right now and He asked you, “What are you seeking?” how would you answer Him?

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John 1:38b And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?”

Jesus was probably probing deeper than his two followers were able or willing to go at the time, so they answered with a surface-level question, “Where are you staying?”

It wasn’t necessarily a bad answer. They wanted to spend time with Jesus to get to know Him better. That’s the purpose of this Bible study—to allow you to spend time with Jesus and get to know Him better.

22. Jesus didn’t tell the men where He was staying. How did He answer them?

John 1:39 He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

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Do you see how relational Jesus’ answer is? He answered the men’s desire to spend time with Him by inviting them to do just that. Jesus patiently invites us to walk through life with Him too. These men’s first experience with Jesus was so impacting that even after many years had

passed, John still remembered what time of day it was: the tenth hour, or about four o'clock in the afternoon.

### 23. Who did Andrew believe Jesus to be?

John 1:41 [Andrew] first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ).

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The Greek word *Christ* means “anointed one.” This is a reference to a prophecy from the book of Daniel (9:25–26) where the Messiah is called the anointed one and a prince. The passage gives the time of His coming and even the time when He would be “cut off,” indicating that the Messiah would die an untimely death. These messianic prophecies were well-known among the Jews, and Andrew introduced Jesus by saying he had found their long-awaited Messiah.

Here’s a truth you can take to the bank: becoming a Jesus follower will change you. Jesus recognized Andrew’s brother as Simon, and then He renamed him Cephas, or Peter in Greek and English. This name means “rock,” and it is not only an awesome name but is also a prophecy of what Peter would become as the leader of the twelve disciples.

That’s one of the great things about Jesus. He already sees all that you and I *can* be. When we choose to follow Him, He helps us become everything He designed us to be.

### **Jesus Calls Disciples to Follow Him**

John 1:43–51 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” And he

said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

24. What did Jesus ask of Philip?

John 1:43 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.”

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This is the call He gives to all of His disciples. *To say yes to Jesus is to become one of His followers.* Philip immediately went and found another friend and told him he had become a follower of Jesus because he too believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies.

25. What was Nathanael’s response, and how did Philip reply to his friend?

John 1:46 Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

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Nazareth was in the region called Galilee, and both were considered the lowliest places in the Roman Empire. So, Nathanael was saying, “*My Messiah wouldn’t come from such a lowly place!*”

Actually, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and His birth fulfilled several Old Testament prophecies. But Philip may not have even known that. Nonetheless, he didn’t try to convince Nathanael by arguing with him. Instead, he asked him to *come and see* for himself. Philip believed that if Nathanael knew Jesus like he knew Him, Nathanael would love Him and want to follow Him too.

From the context it is clear that Jesus had never met Nathanael, yet He saw the two men coming toward Him and greeted Nathanael with, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” (v. 47).

26. What was Nathanael's response and how did Jesus reply to him?

John 1:48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

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In a matter of seconds, Nathanael moved from scoffing to awestruck. Obviously, though Jesus had never met Nathanael, He knew him. In fact, He even knew what Nathaniel was doing when Philip found him.

27. What three names did Nathanael give to Jesus?

John 1:49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

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John the Baptist refused to allow anyone to give him titles that didn't belong to him. But Jesus is now called the "Son of God" and "King of Israel" and appeared to accept these titles without question. What does this tell us about Him?

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As if these titles were not enough, Jesus' response to Nathanael could be summed up as, "Just stick around; you haven't seen anything yet!"

28. What did Jesus tell Nathanael he would see?

John 1:50–51 Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

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When Jesus told Nathanael he would "see greater things than these," He was referring to some of the things John recorded in the next chapters of his gospel, so stay tuned. The phrase about seeing heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on Jesus points back to another

Old Testament event with which Nathanael would have been very familiar.

When the patriarch Jacob left home for the first time, it was because his brother had threatened to kill him. Jacob was running for his life! On the first night away from home, his bed was under the stars and his pillow was a rock.

Genesis 28:12 And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!

Jacob, whom God renamed Israel, called the place Bethel or “House of God.” Jesus was telling Nathanael that *He* is that ladder set up on the earth. Jesus came to earth to provide a way for heaven to reach down to our needs and for us to reach heaven. What a great way to end this first amazing chapter in John.

### **Jesus’ First Miracle**

#### **Jesus’ Conversation with His Mother**

John 2:1–5 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Three days had passed, and Jesus and His disciples had moved west, away from the Jordan, toward Nazareth, where Jesus had grown up. They were coming to attend a wedding in a small, nearby village named Cana. Since God had established marriage beginning with the first man and woman (Genesis 2:24), it is significant that a wedding became the scene of Jesus’ first miracle. Jesus, as God come to earth, sanctioned marriage as an important and ongoing institution.

To run out of provisions at such a major social event would have been an extreme embarrassment to the groom, and possibly an offense to the bride’s family. John’s narrative seems to imply that Jesus’ mother was already at the wedding and appears to have been involved with the serving of the food. Many have speculated that Jesus’ earthly father, Joseph, had passed away and Jesus, as Mary’s firstborn son, had become the natural head of the family. If this were the case, it would be natural for Mary to bring her concerns to Jesus when she discovered that the couple had run out of wine.



29. What is your reaction to the way Jesus responded to His mother?

John 2:4 And Jesus said to her, “woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”

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Modern language usage may lead you to believe that Jesus was being harsh or rude by calling His mother “Woman,” but when Jesus later spoke to Mary from the cross, He used the very same term to address her. There, in a display of selfless compassion for her, He lovingly provided for her future in the midst of His own suffering. The Greek word translated *woman* is a respectful title and can be used as an endearment.

Here, Jesus seemed to be reminding His mother that He now lived under the leadership and timetable of His heavenly Father. This is one of eight times John recorded that Jesus’ hour was yet to come, and in each instance, John was pointing to Jesus’ death and resurrection. Clearly, Jesus’ ultimate purpose for coming to earth was on His mind from the beginning to the end of His ministry.

30. What do you think of Jesus’ mother’s response?

John 2:5 His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

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By bringing the couple’s problem to Jesus, Mary demonstrated that she believed *Jesus could help*. When she urged the servants to follow His instructions, she revealed that she trusted that *Jesus would help*. It is an important lesson for all of us to remember: Jesus helps those who put their trust in Him.

### Jesus Turns Water into Wine

John 2:6–12 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said

to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

31. What happened when the servants followed Jesus’ instructions?

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At His command Jesus turned ordinary water into such excellent wine that the master of the feast noticed and complimented the bridegroom on saving the best wine for the end of the feast. This reveals something significant about Jesus: whatever He did, He did with excellence. Jesus made 120 to 180 gallons of the finest wine—plenty for the feast and enough left over for a generous wedding gift to the couple.

Remember that one of the Christ-claims John made (1:3) is that Jesus is the Creator. He created the grapevines, which turn water from the ground into the sweet juice in the grapes, demonstrating His creative power. Here we see that He doesn’t even need the grapevine to create wine.

32. What did John call this miracle?

John 2:11 This, <sup>a</sup> the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and <sup>b</sup> manifested his glory. And <sup>c</sup> his disciples believed in him.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. Why did Jesus perform miracles? \_\_\_\_\_

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John called Jesus’ miracles “signs” because His miracles are supernatural events that prove who Jesus is. The word *manifested* means “demonstrated.” Jesus came as God in human flesh, and He demonstrated the reality of His glory through His miracles.

c. What was one result of this wedding miracle? \_\_\_\_\_

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33. John would record seven more miracles in his gospel. Why did he record these specific signs?

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.

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If you're still struggling with some of John's Christ-claims, please be patient with yourself. As an eyewitness, John recorded eight of Jesus' miracles to help you believe; so, keep studying.

As we will see from the next account and those that follow, not everyone who came in contact with Jesus believed in Him. In fact, many who believed that He was a miracle worker proved to have shallow faith.

### **Jesus' First Trip to Jerusalem**

#### **Jesus Cleanses the Temple**

John 2:13–17 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." (See Psalm 69:9)

The road to Jerusalem would have been very familiar to Jesus. As a devoted Jew, He traveled to Jerusalem for each of the feasts, which would have taken Him from Galilee to Jerusalem at least three times every year. This was Jesus' first trip to Jerusalem during the ministry period of His life, and the first of three Passovers that John mentioned in his gospel (2:13; 6:4; 11:55). As had already been foreshadowed, the Passover Feast would play heavily in His ministry.

34. What did Jesus do during His first trip to Jerusalem after beginning His earthly ministry?

John 2:14–16 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”

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As Jesus came into the temple area, He should have found an atmosphere of peace and a sense of God’s presence; instead, He found an atmosphere of chaos and greed. As we have seen before, the Passover Feast included the sacrifice and eating of a lamb. Faithful Jews were arriving from all over the Roman Empire to celebrate the Passover. It was impractical for them to bring their sacrificial lambs with them, so the natural commerce of selling and purchasing of animals was expected. What was not expected was price gouging and people taking advantage of the temple currency rules. Instead of adoration for God, Jesus found love for money; instead of a place of reverence for God, He found the promotion of selfishness.

Jesus claimed deity when He described the temple as His Father’s house. As the Son of God, responsible for the holiness of God’s house, Jesus set out to remedy this gross misuse of worship. What is really phenomenal here is that one lone man was able to drive merchants from their goods and bankers from their money. Obviously, Jesus had authority that cannot be explained by mere human force.

35. What was the disciples’ response to this phenomenal accomplishment?

John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

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This quotation from Psalm 69:9 points to the Messiah. Jesus demonstrated that He is the Messiah when He fulfilled this prophecy to cleanse the temple.

## Jesus Foreshadows His Death and Resurrection

John 2:18–22 So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

36. What did the Jewish religious leaders demand?

John 2:18 So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?”

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Jesus responded to their demand by telling them that if they were to “destroy this temple,” in three days He would raise it up again.

37. The religious leaders immediately began to argue the impossibility of such a feat, but what was Jesus foreshadowing?

John 2:21 But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

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They asked for a sign to prove His authority, and He foretold His greatest of all miracles: His crucifixion at the hands of these very religious leaders, and His own resurrection from the dead after three days in the grave.

38. What ultimately caused Jesus’ disciples to believe?

John 2:22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

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In the next verse John refers to the fact that Jesus did many other miracles during these early days of His ministry and that many people believed in Him.

### Jesus Distinguishes Real Faith from Shallow Faith

John 2:23–25 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

39. Why did Jesus not commit Himself unto those who initially indicated that they believed in Him?

John 2:24–25 But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

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Jesus knows what is in the heart and soul of each of us. He committed and devoted Himself to the disciples who followed Him, but not to those who would later show their shallow, short-lived faith.

### SUMMARY

In his prologue, John gave us ten Christ-claims. These are the truths about Jesus that He wanted each of us to believe and that guarantee eternal life to those who do (John 20:30–31).

- #1 Jesus existed before time and is eternal.
- #2 Jesus is God.
- #3 Though Jesus is God, He is distinct from God the Father.
- #4 Jesus is cocreator with God the Father.
- #5 Jesus is self-existent: He exists independently of all other beings and causes.
- #6 Jesus came to communicate life to humans.
- #7 Jesus will be opposed, but He cannot be defeated.
- #8 Jesus, the divine Word, became a human. He is both 100 percent God and 100 percent man.
- #9 Jesus came to manifest the glory of God on earth. All men are

sinners and come short of the glory of God, but Jesus Himself never sinned. He displayed the glory of God.

#10 *Grace* and *truth* come together in Jesus. He is the Truth, and in Grace He gave His perfect life in exchange for our sinful lives so that we might be reconciled to God.

This lesson was full of firsts. John the Baptist, as Jesus' forerunner, first introduced Him as *the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*, and then urged his own disciples to follow Jesus. The first words of Jesus were directed to these disciples—“*What are you seeking?*” Asking ourselves this question will help each of us discern the direction and desires of our own hearts.

In a conversation with Nathanael, one of His first disciples, Jesus claimed to be the lifeline between heaven and earth. He promised that Nathanael would see amazing acts of heaven on earth as he followed Him. Jesus' first miracle at the wedding of Cana immediately began to confirm John's Christ-claims. By making wine out of water, Jesus displayed His power to create.

Jesus' first trip to Jerusalem during His earthly ministry revealed His ultimate purpose for coming to earth: to defeat death through resurrection. These last three paragraphs of chapter 2 unveil three truths about having a close and continuing relationship with God:

- By cleansing the temple, Jesus demonstrated that God is holy and cannot tolerate sin. He has to remove sin from His presence. We cannot expect to have a close relationship with Him while we hold on to sin in our lives.
- When Jesus pointed to His death and resurrection, He was foreshadowing His ultimate purpose for coming to earth. God is loving, and He sent Jesus to die in our place. As the Lamb of God, Jesus died to take our sin penalty upon Himself and to exchange our sinful record for His perfect righteousness.
- By giving Himself only to the disciples who evidenced genuine faith, Jesus demonstrated that He actively searches the hearts of humans. Yes! He is amazingly gracious, but He recognizes shallow, short-lived faith and gives Himself only to those who genuinely believe in Him. He is not just an amazing teacher. He is God in flesh, come to earth to die in our place.

As you read through this Bible study, you will begin to see what genuine faith in Jesus Christ is. If you don't want to wait to find out, feel free to ask your Bible study leader to show you from the Bible now.

## APPLICATION

If you were going to talk to God about what you have learned in this Bible study lesson, what would you tell Him?

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## MEMORIZE

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

## PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENT

In the space provided, record any questions you may have so you can discuss them with your Bible study leader when you meet.

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If you would like to study on your own, try reading a chapter in the book of Luke each day. Luke is one of the Synoptic Gospels and will fill in the parts of Jesus' life that John didn't address. Ask God to speak to you as you read His book. Since He is real, He can do that. He promises that He will convince you in your heart of certain truths about Himself and about you. He will not speak in an audible voice, but you will have a growing awareness that what the Bible says is true! You may even sense a tugging or a squeezing in your heart. That is the Lord!

In the space remaining, record any verses that seem to stand out to you or any questions you have as you read.

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## Conversation #1 Discussion Questions

Have you ever met someone famous? Who was it, and what were the circumstances? Were they what you were expecting?

In John's prologue he could have easily referred to Jesus by His name. Instead, he called Jesus "the Word." How is this significant? (pp. 12–13)

Whether you know Jesus personally or not, which adjectives would you use to describe Him to someone who has never heard of Him before?

Now here's a tough question: Can you find support for your description from question #2 in the Bible? (p. 13)

Discuss the significance of calling Jesus "the Lamb of God." (pp. 20–21)

Before Jesus' disciples started to follow Him, He asked them, "What are you seeking?" What do people seek after before they start following Jesus? What did the disciples seek after?

What things are you seeking after personally, professionally, and spiritually?

Choose one of the ten Christ-claims from John 1. It could be the one you find to be most profound or one you question. Discuss this Christ-claim with your Bible study leader. (pp. 33–34)

Why do you think the disciples were so quick to follow Jesus? (pp. 22–27)