

John

Believe and Live

Marilyn Kunz & Catherine Schell

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John 1

———— In the Beginning, the Word

The Apostle John writes his account near the close of the first century. He desires for his readers to know who Jesus Christ is, his character, his actions, his teachings. To do this, where will he begin? How can he present the evidence clearly so that readers will believe the truth about Jesus?

John begins his Gospel with a prologue about *the Word* (1:1-18). In the original biblical languages, Greek and Hebrew, he opens with the same phrase as the book of Genesis: *In the beginning*. John often refers to Old Testament Scripture, but his prologue casts the Hebrew Scriptures in a new light, introducing Jesus Christ as the one who links eternity and time.

Read John 1:1-18

1. Find at least fifteen things said about *the Word*, who he is and what he does.

*Note: According to Greek philosophy when John wrote, the Word (Logos) was the cosmic principle of rationality or life that brought order and vitality to matter. By identifying the man Jesus with **the Word**, rich in meaning both for Jews and Greeks, John makes a claim about Jesus' identity that would have shocked his contemporaries.*

2. What do you learn about the man named John, his task, and his testimony?

3. If you had no other portion of the Bible, what would you know about Jesus Christ from these verses?

What does a positive response to him involve (verses 10-13)?

What is the result?

4. How does the writer of the Gospel fit Jesus Christ into the message of the Old Testament?

Read John 1:19-34

5. Where, why, and with whom does this interview take place?

*Note: **Bethany on the other side of the Jordan** is likely to have been a small village on the east side of the Jordan River near a ford, where people could easily cross the river. The **Pharisees** (verse 24) were a Jewish religious party that strictly obeyed the Law of Moses and added regulations to it through the centuries.*

6. Read the dialogue in verses 19-27 by having a different person read each question and one person read John's answers.

How does John identify himself and his job?

7. What is the difference between John the Baptist's ministry and that of the one coming after him (verses 26-34)?

How is John able to identify Jesus as the one greater than he?

8. What do you find particularly striking about John's description of Jesus in this section?

Read John 1:35-51

9. Describe the events of the next day, after John's declaration of Jesus' identity (verse 29).

What do these events reveal about John, his disciples, and Jesus?

10. What deeper significance might you read into Jesus' question (verse 38) and the disciples' response?

If you had been one of those disciples, how might you have answered Jesus' question?

11. What change do you observe in Andrew's understanding of who Jesus is (verses 38-41)?

What do you think motivates Andrew's actions?

How do you account for the response of Andrew and Peter to what they learn about Jesus?

*Note: The use of the phrase **the next day** (verses 29, 35, 43) highlights the rapid movement of events after the inquiry of priests and Levites from Jerusalem and John's identification of Jesus as **the Lamb of God** and **God's Chosen One**.*

12. Describe Philip and how he tells Nathanael about Jesus.

How do you account for Nathanael's reaction?

13. In verse 39 Jesus says, **Come, and you will see**. In verse 46 Philip issues the same invitation to answer Nathanael's objection. Why is this still a valid response to anyone who is hesitantly considering Jesus?

14. What does Nathanael recognize about Jesus? Why?

*Note: In answering Nathanael, Jesus refers to the incident in Genesis 28:10-19. The Greek word for **you** in verse 51 is plural, so Jesus here addresses his promise not only to Nathanael but to those with him.*

SUMMARY

1. What most impresses you about John the Baptist?
2. Define all the titles and all the ways Jesus is described in this chapter. Which of these descriptions is most meaningful to you? Why?

PRAYER

O God, open our eyes to see and our ears to hear what you are saying to us through the study of this Gospel. We hear John's clear witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and as the Son of God who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Help us to understand what it means that the Word through whom all things were made, the source of all light and life, took on human flesh and came to live among us in Jesus Christ. We pray for direction and teaching by your Holy Spirit as we join Andrew and Peter, Philip and Nathanael, listening to Jesus and learning from him. Amen.