

Advent 2

John 1:1-14 – Leaders version

For a one hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

*1. **SHOUT OUT** Read John 1:1-14. What words are frequently repeated?

This passage can be very difficult to follow if it's not read well, so I'd suggest that you read it out yourself! Try to emphasise the repeated words to give the listeners something to hook onto – Word, God, Life, Light, World. Write them on the flip-chart as the group identify them.

What does the passage say and mean?

60 minutes

*2. Read John 1:1. Who do you think 'the Word' is? Why is this an appropriate title for this person?

'The Word' is Jesus. 'The Word' refers to the revelation of God, and Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God – John 14:9.

*3. What do you learn about 'the Word' in v1-2?

1. *Jesus is not created, he was there in the beginning*
2. *Evidence of relationship within the Godhead - trinity*
3. *Jesus did not gain his divinity, he has always had it*

*4. John's gospel starts with the words 'In the beginning, '. Where else in the Bible do we read these words and why do you think John is using them here?

Genesis 1:1 – ask the group to look it up. John deliberately uses this phrase at the start of his gospel, to remind us of Genesis 1:1, and emphasize that the Son of God is not created: he is the Creator, John 1:3.

5. Read John 1:3-4. Where does v4 tell us that life comes from? What do you think of this?

Life comes from Jesus (see also John 10:28, 14:6) - he gives it to us. It doesn't come from anywhere else – not from chance, genes or test-tubes.

If they don't agree that this is true, ask them to assume for a moment that it is, and think about the implications if it were true.

Implications include:

- *We are only alive today because God made us so.*
- *No life can happen by chance if God is the source of life – even if our birth wasn't planned by our parents, we are not an accident.*
- *Jesus existed before the world was created if he is the source of life, etc.*

*6. Verse 4 isn't just talking about life that allows us to live here and now. The deeper meaning is *eternal life*. How is that eternal life described in v4 and why do you think this particular word is used?

As light. Light penetrates darkness, reveals things that are hidden, etc. Eternal life penetrates the darkness of death, which we all face. Eternal life is in and from Jesus – we can't get it from anyone else. This verse therefore gives us hope. Jesus later describes himself as the light of the world, John 8:12.

*7. Read v5. What problem do we read about in this verse, and what do you think it means?

The darkness has not understood the light. This refers to spiritual blindness / deafness / lack of understanding. The darkness is our sinfulness, see Mark 7:21-23.

8. Read v6-8. What did John come to do?

To be a witness to the light, i.e. Jesus, so that people would believe in Jesus. John was not the light himself, he was not the Christ, he was the witness about the Christ. Jesus is the Christ. ('The Christ' means 'God's anointed King' – the name given to the person the Jews were waiting for God to send. It means the same as 'The Messiah'.)

Questions 9-11 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. You need to write them on flip-chart sheets for the group to work on in pairs.

9. **SDL** Read Mark 1:4. What did John do and what did he preach to the people?

He baptised the people (submerged them in the river). His baptism was one of repentance and forgiveness of sins – John's baptism symbolised the forgiveness of their sins and being washed clean, signifying moral and spiritual renewal.

10. **SDL** Read Mark 1:8. How is the baptism by John different to the baptism by Jesus?

The Christ (Jesus) would baptise people with the Holy Spirit. This is important – John was just a man, so he could only baptise with water. But Jesus, the Christ, is God, and he washes us clean with the Holy Spirit – there is spiritual power in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it is effective not symbolic.

11. **SDL** Read John 1:9-10. John was sent to testify that Jesus, the true light, was coming into the world. What problem do we read about in v10 and where have we seen this before?

The world did not recognise Jesus, as in v5.

12. What does v10 tell us about the origins of the world that is important?

The world was made through Jesus.

Don't get into a creation / evolution debate – try to keep the focus on the fact that Jesus made the world, somehow. It's more important that people remember this than a lengthy discussion on evolution!

13. Read v12. What do we need to do to become a child of God?

'Believe in his name'. You need to explain that it's not just believing in Jesus on an academic level – i.e. that a man called Jesus existed. It means believing the gospel in your heart – trusting Jesus and what he has done, and responding to him (Jesus said that we must repent and believe, Mark 1:15, this is the response – saying that we are sorry to God and turning away from our sins).

*14. **STICKERS** Why do you think God decided to come and live in his own creation, as a human?

Read through the stickers, and then make sure that the right answer is given: God became a man because only a man can die in the place of men. Someone needed to die for us because we are sinners, and our sin is so offensive to God that it separates us from God and it results in death. Jesus died in our place, paying the price for our sins (death) so that we don't have to – if we trust in his death in our place. And he rose again from death, opening the door to eternal life for everyone who trusts in him. Use John 1:12-14 to explain this.

Jesus said that he had come to show us the Father, John 12:45, John 14:9 – we cannot see God, but when we see what Jesus is like, we see what God is like. So another reason that God came as a human was so that we could relate to him.

*15. **SHOUT OUT** Think of things that Jesus would have experienced on earth that he would never have experienced in heaven.

Cold, hunger, dependence on Mary and Joseph to care for him, rejection, dirt, mess, mud, mosquitoes etc.

*16. Bearing in mind only the list of things that Jesus experienced on your behalf on the flip-chart, what does this tell you about how much Jesus loves you?

Try to keep the group referring to the list from Q15 as evidence of how much Jesus loves them, so that they answer the question objectively, as a statement of fact derived from a set of evidence. This should result in positive answers. If they start to think subjectively (i.e. about themselves, not about Jesus' sacrifice in coming to earth) their emotions and hang-ups will get involved and they will easily become negative.

How can I live according to these truths in my life?

20 minutes

1. If someone on the wing asked you what you had learnt in the Bible study today, what would you say?

2. Think about the way that you usually think about Christmas – different programmes on TV, people giving gifts etc. Are there any ways in which you are starting to think differently about the meaning of Christmas, as a result of these Bible studies during Advent?

3. Do you think that the light of Jesus fills your heart or do you think it is still dark in there? If it's still dark in your heart, do you want to learn more about the good news about Jesus?

This is an opportunity to offer an evangelistic course, such as Christianity Explored Prison Edition or the Guilt and Forgiveness Course, in the New Year.

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