



John 1 v 1-14 – Leader's version

Jesus, the light of the world

For an hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

Explain that this passage is 'the Christmas account' according to John. Unlike Matthew and Luke, John doesn't mention Mary and Joseph, a baby or any angels. He focusses on what was going on in the spiritual realm.

*1. **SHOUT OUT** Read John 1 v 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 v 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; Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God – John 14 v 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 v 1. Look it up with the group. John deliberately uses this phrase at the start of his gospel to remind us of Genesis 1 v 1 and emphasize that the Son of God is not created; He is the Creator, John 1 v 3.

5. Read John 1 v 3-4. Where does life come from? What do you think of this?

Life comes from Jesus – He gives it to us. Life isn't by chance, genes or test-tubes.

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

- *We are alive today because Jesus gave us life*
- *Life has value*
- *No life can happen by chance if Jesus is the source of life – even if our birth wasn't planned by our parents, we are not an accident*
- *This isn't just talking about Christians, it's talking about the whole of creation*
- *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 eternal life described in v4 and why do you think this particular word is used?

'Light'. Light penetrates and dispels darkness, reveals hidden things, shows the way, etc. Eternal life penetrates the darkness of death. Eternal life is in and from Jesus; we can't get it from anyone else, John 14 v 6. This verse therefore gives us hope. Jesus later describes Himself as the light of the world, John 8 v 12.

*7. Read v5. What do you think this means?

Different versions of the bible use different words in this verse, both valid translations of the Gk katelaben.

NIV1984 - The light is shining but the darkness has not (understood) it. This refers to spiritual blindness / deafness / lack of understanding. The darkness is our sinfulness, see Mark 7 v 21-23.

NIV2011 & ESV – The light is shining but the darkness has not (overcome) it. There is darkness in this world but Jesus brings truth, knowledge of God, purity, eternal life etc and the darkness cannot destroy this.

Both these translations of katelaben are consistent with the rest of Scripture, so neither is 'wrong' or evidence of mistakes in translation..

John the Baptist

8. Read v6-9. On whose authority did John the Baptist speak? (v6)

God's authority.

9. What did John the Baptist come to do? (v7)

To be a witness to testify about the light, i.e. about Jesus, so that people would believe in Jesus.

10. How does John the gospel writer clear up the confusion about who John the Baptist was? (v8-9)

He says that John (the Baptist) was not the light – he was the witness about the light.

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

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

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

12. **SDL** Read Mark 1 v 8. How was baptism by John different to 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.

13. **SDL** Read John 1 v 9-11. John was sent to testify that the true light, Jesus, 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, or receive Him (believe in Him).

Jesus

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

'Believe in His name', i.e. we need to respond to what Jesus has done for us. This doesn't mean believing in Jesus on an academic level – i.e. just believing a man called Jesus existed. It means believing the gospel in your heart, trusting in Jesus and what He has done to save us from sin and death.

(It's not our faith, or our belief, that saves us – it's Jesus' death in our place which saves us. Not the faith, but what we put our faith in!)

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Do you think 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 TFCM Guilt and Forgiveness Course.

*15. **STICKERS** Read v14. Why do you think the Son of God decided to come and live in His own creation, as a human?

Read through the stickers, and then make sure the right answer is given: the Son of God became a man because only a man can die in the place of men (to pay for sin) but only God can pay such a price.

Someone needed to die for us because we are sinners: our sin is so offensive to God that it separates us from Him and results in death. Jesus died in our place, paying the price for our sins so that we don't have to, if we trust in His death in our place. He rose again from death, opening the door to eternal life for everyone who trusts in Him. Use John 1 v 12 to explain this.

Jesus said He had come to show us the Father, John 12 v 45, John 14 v 9 – we cannot see God, but when we see what Jesus is like, we see what God is like.

Other benefits of Christ's humanity include Him being able to understand our suffering, etc.

*16. What does John tell us about Jesus? What evidence does John give for his claims?

Divinity, humanity, glory, only Son of the Father, sent by the Father, full of grace and truth.

John is an eye-witness to Jesus' ministry – he is reporting what he saw and heard. Consider the validity of eye-witness testimony, and the significance of the lack of contemporaneous disputes against John's record.

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What new things have you learnt about Jesus from this study?

Check out – ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.



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