

## Session 1: John 1:1–34

### SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

#### **Main Idea**

Jesus is the eternal Son of God, revealed to us so that we might believe in him and receive eternal life.

#### **Head Change**

To know Jesus's true identity: God of the universe incarnate with us.

#### **Heart Change**

To feel the love of God for you, that he would send his Son to bring us out of our sin and darkness.

#### **Life Change**

To live a life of worship, giving Jesus all we have.

### OPEN

**Who do you think Jesus is?**

**Today, everyone seems to have a unique perspective on who Jesus *really* was.** People may say he was a good teacher, a charismatic leader, or just a nice man. They may even go so far as to say he was a prophet or a spiritually enlightened person. But in the Gospel of John, we will see that Jesus is much more than any of those answers.

He is the Son of God who came to us so that we might believe in him and have eternal life. To think he is anything less is to completely misunderstand who he is.

### READ

## **WATCH**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Dr. Tony Evans's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

**How does this passage describe Jesus?**

**What is the importance of Jesus becoming a man (the Incarnation)?**

**What is the appropriate way to respond to Jesus Christ?**

Show Session 1: *John 1:1–34* (11 minutes).

## **DISCUSS**

---

The opening chapters of a book set the stage for the rest of the story. The Gospel of John is no different. **What stands out to you most in this passage? What did Dr. Evans say is the primary focus of this Gospel?**

**Note:** For further study on the background and purpose of the Book of John, see **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.

Read John 1:1–18.

At this point, John has not revealed who the Word is (interestingly, the name of Jesus doesn't appear until verse 17) but the passage does tell us a lot about him. **What does this passage tell us about the Word? Who is he?**

This passage not only describes the Word's identity but also his actions and purposes. He has a lot going on. **What are the things the Word has done? What is he doing now?**

**Note:** For further study on the Word, see **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.

Have you ever seen darkness so thick, so deep, that it could not be penetrated by a flashlight? No, light always overcomes darkness. Examine verses 4–5. **What does it mean that the Word, Jesus, is the “light of mankind”?**

Now, you might be thinking, “If this person was in the world, we would all know about it.” Reread verses 10–13. The tragic irony is that Jesus, the Word, came into the world and was neither received nor recognized. We need “witnesses,” like John the Baptist, to point him out to us. **Who introduced you to Jesus? In what ways did they “come as a witness to testify” to you? In what ways are you a witness for Jesus?**

**Note:** For a peek at the Greek words for “believe” and “witness,” see **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.

We will learn more about what it means to be born again in John 3, but we get a sneak peek of it here. When we believe in Jesus, we become sons and daughters of God.

Look at verses 12–13. **What is required of you to be considered a child of God? In what ways has this truth changed the way you live?**

Verse 14 gives us a world-changing truth: The Word, the light of the world, is a knowable person. He is not an impersonal force or a hidden savior; he is the present God full of grace and truth. **When have you felt alone or like God was far away? What made you feel like he was distant?**

Consider what this passage is teaching: God has not stayed far from you, but has sent his Son to you, in the same form as you, so that he might bring you grace and truth. **What comfort does Christ's nearness give you?**

Dr. Evans ended his teaching by reading from Philippians 2. Read Philippians 2:6–11. **What does this passage teach you about Jesus? In what ways does it help you understand his mission on earth?**

**Note:** For a deeper look at Jesus dwelling with us, see **Go Deeper Section 4** at the end of this study.

Verses 14–17 repeatedly mention grace. **What can we learn about grace in this passage? What is the source of God's grace?**

**Note:** For a deeper look the Covenant of Grace, see **Go Deeper Section 5** at the end of this study.

Dr. Evans noted that our appropriate response to Jesus is worship. Once you see who Jesus truly is, “you don't give him excuses, you give him all you've got because he's the only one in the universe worthy of all you have.” **What areas of your life, if any, do you keep from Jesus? What keeps you from bringing those areas of your life to Jesus?**

Read John 1:19–34.

This passage introduces us to an important character: John the Baptist. He is not the same John that wrote this book, but a herald of Jesus, someone prophesied to come hundreds of years before (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 4:5–6). John 1:7 says John the Baptist came as a witness to testify about Jesus. **What is John's testimony? What does he say about himself and about Jesus?**

John the Baptist is a great example for how we can serve as witnesses for Jesus. **What do you say when you talk about Jesus? Is it easy or difficult for you to tell people about Jesus? Why do you think that is?**

Look again at what John says about Jesus, especially in verses 29–34. **What could it look like to emulate John and his message when you tell people about Jesus?**

Since Jesus is the Word, the creator and sustainer of all things who has come to us, there is no greater calling than to tell the world about him. In verse 31, John the Baptist says he did not recognize Jesus at first but lived in such a way that Jesus might be revealed to his countrymen. **What habits could you change in your life to reveal Jesus to the people around you? What new habits could you start? Which ones need to end?**

## **LAST WORD**

In the beginning God spoke, and light invaded the darkness. But instead of walking with God in the light, humanity fell into sin and darkness. Now, God has once again invaded the darkness with the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. He has come to us with grace and truth to redeem us from the darkness of our sin and to reconcile us to himself.

Our response to him can be no less than worship, giving him all we have and doing all we can to make him known in a world that has neither recognized nor received him.

As we continue through the Gospel of John, prayerfully examine Jesus. Learn more about him. Trust him more fully. When you get to know Jesus, you get to know the God of the universe. That is an exciting journey!

## **GO DEEPER**

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

### **1. Purpose of the Gospel of John**

When Gospel of John was written, the church was no longer a small Judean gathering; it was a multinational, multiethnic, cross-cultural movement. Many Christians at that time had not grown up with the Hebrew Scriptures and had difficulty understanding them. Some were even attempting to change the church, mixing their former philosophies and religious ideas with the truth of Christ, creating heresies and strange new beliefs (e.g., Gnosticism, Docetism).

The Gospel of John serves as an introduction to Jesus for all people, showing us clearly that he is God.

Compare John 1:1–5 to Genesis 1:1–3. **What similarities do you notice?**

These similarities are not an accident. In Genesis, God shows us how all things were created. In John 1, God shows us who was behind the act of creation.

The Gospel of John also protected the early church from heresy by confronting false beliefs with truth. Gnosticism probably isn't a big problem at your church, but we do still struggle with mixing our own ideas with the truth.

**Do you think it is easier to hold to what the Bible says or to adapt it to our culture? Why?**

**What are some ways you have been tempted to adapt Jesus to your own lifestyle?**

Spend some time in prayer for your group, your church, and those who do not know Jesus. Pray we would see Jesus as he truly is, the Son of God; that God would

reveal where we have tried to adapt Jesus to our own ideology so that we might repent; that those far from God would see the grace and beauty of Christ and put their faith in him.

## 2. The Word

“The Word” may seem like a weird title to us, but for ancient readers, both the Greeks and the Jews, it was a powerful statement. As Dr. Evans explained, the Greeks thought the Word, or *logos*, was the impersonal force that ordered nature and held the universe together. To the Jews, the Word was God’s creative force and authority—whenever God spoke, his words became reality.

Read Genesis 1:3, 6, 11; Psalm 107:19–21; Isaiah 55:10–11.

**What do you notice about God’s Word in these passages?**

**In light of these observations, what does it mean that Jesus is the Word?**

Think about how this truth changes your life. The Word of God, Jesus, has come to *you* and called you to follow him. **What are three ways you can faithfully follow him this week?**

## 3. Peek at the Greek: Believe and Witness

There are two words the Gospel of John uses more than any other book of the Bible: believe and witness. John uses the verb “believe” (*pisteo*) a whopping ninety-eight times, an average of four times per chapter. The verb *martureo*, “to witness,” is used thirty-three times in this book but only twice in all three of the other Gospels combined.

John is constantly calling us both to believe in Jesus and to witness to others about him. **What does his call to witness tell you about the purpose of this Gospel?**

This book is a witness to the works and person of Jesus Christ that encourages us to believe in him. It also shows us how believers act as witnesses so that more people may know Jesus.

Read John 1:6–13. **In what ways can you be a witness so that others might believe in Jesus?**

#### 4. Jesus, God with Us

During the Exodus, God chose to dwell among his people in a tent called the tabernacle (Exodus 25:8–9). His presence in the tabernacle was the center of worship, traveling with his people until Solomon built a grand temple, a permanent place for God's presence to dwell, in Jerusalem (1 Kings 5–6).

But, in both the tabernacle and the temple, God's presence was separated from the people of God by a heavy veil. Sin literally separated God's people from him. Only the high priest was allowed to go behind the veil to enter the presence of God, and that only once a year to make atonement for the people's sin.

In Jesus, God has again come to "tabernacle" with us (*eskenosen*, John 1:14). But this time he is not separated from us. When Jesus died, he paid the penalty for our sin and made a way for us to approach God (see Mark 15:38; Matthew 27:51).

Read Hebrews 10:19–25. **What stands out to you in this passage?**

God wants you to draw near to him. **What can you do today to draw closer to God?**

**What weekly habits can you practice to draw nearer to God?**

#### 5. The Covenant of Grace

Read John 1:17.

**How does this verse compare and contrast Jesus to Moses?**

Moses *was given* the covenant of the Law (Exodus 20:1–21; 34:1–28) but Jesus *gave* us the covenant of grace. Read Hebrews 3:1–6. **What does this passage tell you about Jesus and Moses?**

Sometimes, we think that the Law was bad, something broken that needed to be done away with. But these passages both state that the Law was good. John calls it a "gracious gift" and Hebrews 3:1–6 praises the faithfulness of Moses.

The Law points helps us by pointing out our sinfulness and need for a savior (see Romans 7:7). Jesus is that savior, who came to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17) and pay the penalty for our sins (1 Peter 2:24) so that we could be forgiven and spend eternity with God.

The grace of Jesus is good news. **In what ways does the truth and grace of Jesus impact your understanding of God, your love for God, and the way you will live for God?**