

IN THE
BEGINNING
WAS THE...

WORD

A STUDY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

LESSON 2 – The Word is...GOD

FACILITATOR'S Note

MAIN POINT THIS WEEK: *Jesus is GOD (1:1–2, 18; 5:17–18; 8:58–59; 10:30–33; 20:28).*

The following lesson is designed to help class participants develop an understanding that Jesus is God. This lesson has been one of struggle for centuries. Just how can God be one, but three? Today you will help your class come to know Jesus as not only Lord, but GOD. Everyone is faced with the decision to believe that Jesus really is who He claimed to be. Either He is, or He isn't. He didn't leave any room for any other decision. However, in our day and age we struggle with wanting to make Jesus in our own image for our own purposes. But He will not allow that.

Spend time today helping your class participants grapple with this concept and what they have struggled with in regards to God being one, but three. This concept has always been surrounded in controversy and is one of the main arguments against Christianity from many groups. So, how do we understand it and better yet, how can we help other understand it?

Remember, this semester we hope to provide material that will provide knowledge (HEAD); then ask questions that will bring us understanding (HEART); and then motivate participants to go and live the Word in the world and demonstrate Godly wisdom (HANDS). Help them with that today.

HEAD → HEART → HANDS

As always, we would encourage you to begin preparing for each lesson by digging into the Word and specifically the text for each of the weeks. **This week the texts are: 1:1–2, 18; 5:17–18; 8:58–59; 10:30–33; 20:28.** As you move through the Word, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is then that you should approach this lesson plan and use it (and others) only as a guide for the weeks to come. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.

PRAYER



Begin your time with a prayer asking God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit as you and your class seek to encounter Him through His Holy Word.

FOCUS

- Understand that Jesus is God (THE WORD).
- To understand how this message was so radical and controversial and still is today.
- Recognize that it is not only important to make Jesus our Lord, but more importantly to make Him our God.

DISCUSSION STARTERS



(OPTIONAL)

- What are some ways in which you have tried to describe the Trinity (God the Father, Son, and Spirit) to people so they could understand it better? Water (come in the form of liquid, solid, and gas)? An egg (with yoke, white, and shell)? We can even see ourselves in three parts (heart [emotions/feelings/etc]; mind [thoughts/logic/analysis]; body [the physical, how we live and act]) but we are still one person. Others?
- Why is the concept of one God, three persons so hard for us to grasp or take a hold of?

KNOWLEDGE HEAD

From the Gospel of John

- 1:1-2, 18
 - Key Points
 - One of John's main objectives in writing his Gospel is to establish who Jesus is. He opens the Gospel by making a very bold and controversial claim. The Word, Jesus, is God.
 - John's opening words take us back to Genesis 1:1 with "In the beginning..." This is no mistake. His intent here is to help the reader understand that when God created, Jesus was present and a part of the process.
 - These verses locate Jesus not only in the beginning, but also in existence with God in eternity past.
 - The way that John chooses to designate Jesus is by no mistake. Jesus is THE WORD.
 - **QUESTION:** Why would John call Jesus THE WORD? What significance is there to this identification?
 - To answer this question, we have to go back to the beginning. When we look to Creation, we see all that God made and in the order He made it. But how did He make it all? WITH HIS WORD.
 - Seven times God spoke, and seven times things were created (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24). From the beginning, God demonstrated the power of His Word and how it has the ability to not only create, but also destroy.
 - The beauty in this is to consider how each of us was created. God spoke, and we came into existence. Therefore, each and every person on this earth is a Word from God.
 - The Hebrews recognized the power of God's Word and revered it. His Word is supreme and all creation bows to it. "Let there be...." And there was.
 - Jesus displayed this same powerful Word as He spoke and "even the wind and waves obey him!" His disciples were terrified at His words and the power they displayed. (Mark 4:39-41)
 - God relates very personally with His people through His Word (both spoken and written word). He used it to create them, to guide them, to correct/discipline them, to communicate His love for them, etc.
 - Therefore, for John to use the designation of THE WORD for Jesus is extremely significant. He is saying that Jesus is the powerful WORD that spoke all there is into existence with God; who existed before all there was and is; who is extremely personal and present

with His people; and who is intimately connected with the Father.

Jesus is God.

- Verse 18 demonstrates not only that Jesus is God, but our only true way to see God. Some translations quote “the only Son”, but really the text is saying “the only God”. John is showing here two parts of God. God the Father whom no one has seen, and God the Son (THE WORD) and by/through Him we see God as He reflects God as the exact imprint or representation of God to humanity (Hebrews 1:2-3).
- Contemporary Application
 - Why does this matter to us today? What is the contemporary significance of these verses?
 - Does it really matter that we see Jesus as God? Can't we just say He was a prophet of God or a teacher of God and still be ok? Why is it important that we confess that Jesus is God and not just a prophet or good teacher? Discuss.
 - How can we share this message with people today?
- 5:17-18
 - Key Points
 - In verse 17, Jesus calls God His Father. This designates a very close relationship between the Father and the Son.
 - As Jesus is combating the persecution of the Jews because He heals on the Sabbath, He relates His work with that of the Father. Jesus is demonstrating that He is Lord over the Sabbath as is the Father. This is a claim of deity for which the Jews wanted to kill Him.
 - Verse 18 explains why this infuriated the Jews. Jesus was not only breaking the Sabbath and saying His work was the same as the work of the Father. He was also claiming to be equal with God. This was blasphemy.
 - Contemporary Application
 - Today many people say that they believe that Jesus was a good man, great teacher, and even perhaps a prophet. They do not believe that He was the Son of God or God Himself. How is this possible if He Himself claimed deity and equality with God?
 - C.S. Lewis once said, *“I am trying here to prevent saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher; but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”* (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 56)

- 8:58-59
 - Key Points
 - The claim that Jesus makes here sent everyone over the edge. They were about to stone Him. Why? What got them so stirred up?
 - Jesus claims to be alive **before Abraham was**. The Jewish nations father who lived more than 2,000 years earlier. Jesus does not just say He is before Abraham though. He finishes His statement by saying before Abraham was, "I am". This is the same self-description God made of Himself in Exodus 3:14. He's not only claiming to have lived long ago, but also to be the very same God who spoke to Moses in the burning bush.
 - We will discuss this in further detail in a lesson to come, but for now this claim is not a simple claim nor can the Jews simply dismiss it. Jesus is claiming to be Jehovah, which is deserving of immediate death.
 - Contemporary Application
 - Does Jesus leave any room for people in regards to who He is? Then why do we try and make Him something He isn't or ever claimed to be?
- 10:30-33
 - Key Points
 - Jesus' claim that **I and the Father are one** (i.e., one entity/being—the Greek here is neuter) sounds much like the Hebrew confession of the Shema, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One (Deut. 6:4)." Therefore, Jesus' words claim deity, which once again cause the Jews to pick up stones to put him to death.
 - This unity with the Father is the foundation on which Jesus' followers are to be unified (John 17:22). As we found in 1:1, here the doctrine of the Trinity (one God, three persons) again appears: "I and the Father" indicates more than one person in the Godhead, but "are one" indicates that God is one (in being/nature).
 - Contemporary Application
 - What would it be like to have everything you have always believe to be challenged and rocked to its core?
 - Would you have responded any differently toward Jesus? Explain.
- 20:28
 - Key Points
 - The claim made here this time is not made by Jesus, but by one of His disciples, Thomas. When asked by Jesus to believe in Him, Thomas' response is not only to claim Jesus as His Lord, but also His GOD! This statement, confession, is one of the strongest claims to Jesus' deity found in Scripture. Not only did Jesus claim these things concerning Himself, but His disciples did as well.
 - Contemporary Application
 - It's one thing to claim Jesus as Lord of your life. A Lord is simply someone who has power and authority over another. Taken that way, we have many Lords in our lives. You can claim Him as Lord and be unchanged. But to claim Jesus as God requires complete transformation because He is the object of our affection and the sustainer of life. We can serve many Lords in our lives, but only one God.

- Which is easier? To claim Jesus as Lord or God? Explain.
- What keeps us from claiming Jesus as God? Most of the time, it's our desire to be our own god (just like Adam and Eve).

UNDERSTANDING HEART

- So, why does John spend so much time on establishing Jesus as God (THE WORD)?
- How can we communicate this message to people today?
- The concept of one God, three persons is one that is constantly attacked. Do you feel you can defend it and help others understand it?

WISDOM HANDS

- Who do you know (family, friend, co-worker, etc.) that needs to hear this message? What one thing could you do this week to begin that conversation?
- List three people in your life that you want to share the Gospel message with. Spend time praying for them everyday asking God to provide opportunities for you to share with them. Also, ask God to give you the courage and words to speak.

PRAYER



End your time together with a prayer. Thank Him for sending His Word into the world to dwell among us and save us. What a great God we serve!

CLASS OUTLINE

"...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." (John 20:31) The Gospel of John was written so that those who read its message may believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, THE CHRIST. The following outline holds the major themes expounded on in the Gospel of John in order that its readers may believe in Jesus and have eternal life. (Adapted from the "Key Themes" outline in the ESV Study Bible):

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (January 4)
2. THE WORD IS...
GOD (January 11)
 - a. Jesus is GOD
 - b. 1:1–2, 18; 5:17–18; 8:58–59; 10:30–33; 20:28
3. THE WORD IS...
BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD (January 18)
 - a. Jesus existed before the creation of all there is.
 - b. 1:1–2; 8:58; 17:5, 24
4. THE WORD IS...
OMNISCIENT (ALL KNOWING) (January 25)
 - a. Jesus has supernatural knowledge that only God can possess.
 - b. 1:48; 2:4, 19, 23–25; 3:14; 4:17–18; 6:51, 70; 8:28; 9:3; 10:15, 17–18; 11:4, 14; 12:24, 32; 13:10–11, 38; 21:18–19
5. THE WORD IS...
THE MESSIAH AND SON OF GOD (February 1)
 - a. Jesus is the promised Messiah and Son of God prophesied in Old Testament.
 - b. 1:36, 41, 49; 3:18; 4:25, 29; 5:25; 7:26, 27, 31, 41, 42; 9:22; 10:24, 36; 11:4, 27; 12:34; 19:7; 20:30–31
6. THE WORD IS...
THE "I AM" (February 8)
 - a. Jesus is the "I AM" from the Old Testament. He is Yahweh/Jehovah.
 - b. 4:26; 6:20, 35, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 28, 58; 9:5; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1; 18:5–6 (cf. Ex. 3:14–15; Isa. 41:4; 43:10–13, 25; 45:18; 51:12; 52:6)
7. THE WORD IS...
THE SON WHO WAS SENT BY AND REFLECTS THE FATHER (February 15)
 - a. Jesus was sent by God and reflects the very essence of the Father.
 - b. 3:17, 35–36; 5:19–26; 6:40; 8:35–36; 14:13; 17:1
8. THE WORD IS...
THE FULFILLMENT OF JEWISH FESTIVALS/INSTITUTIONS (February 22)
 - a. Jesus fulfills the Jewish festivals and institutions found in the Law (even the temple itself).
 - b. 1:29, 36; 2:14–22, esp. v. 21; 4:23–24; 8:12; 9:5; 19:14
9. THE WORD IS...
THE GIVER OF ETERNAL LIFE (March 1)
 - a. Jesus gives eternal life to those who believe in Him.
 - b. 1:4; 3:15–16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 26, 39–40; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47–48, 51, 53–54, 68; 8:12; 10:10, 25, 28; 11:25; 12:25, 50; 14:6; 17:2–3; 20:31

10. THE WORD IS...

A MIRACLE WORKER (March 8)

- a. Jesus performs signs and wonders that demonstrate that He is the promised Messiah.
- b. 2:1–11, 13–22; 4:46–54; 5:1–15; 6:1–15; 9:1–41; 11:1–44

11. THE WORD IS...

TESTIFIED BY OTHERS TO BE THE MESSIAH (March 15)

- a. Witnesses testify that Jesus is the Messiah.
- b. 1:7–8, 15, 19, 32, 34; 3:11, 32–33; 4:39; 5:31–39; 8:14, 18; 10:25; 15:26–27; 18:37; 19:35; 21:24

12. THE WORD IS...

UNIFIED WITH FATHER AND SPIRIT IN THEIR WORK OF REVELATION AND REDEMPTION (March 22)

- a. Father, Son, and Spirit are united in their work.
- b. 14:17–18, 23, 26; 15:26; 20:21–22

13. THE WORD IS...

THE BASIS OF SALVATION (March 29)

- a. It is by Jesus' death that God brings His people salvation.
 - i. 1:29; 3:14–15; 6:51–58; 10:15; 11:50–52; 12:24; 15:13
- b. God is sovereign in salvation.
 - i. 3:21; 5:21; 6:37–45, 64–65; 10:16, 26–30; 15:16; 17:2, 6, 9

14. BELIEVERS MUST...

CONFESS AND BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH (April 12)

- a. Salvation is obtained by believing in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God.
 - i. 1:12; 3:15, 16; 5:24; 6:29, 35; 8:24; 11:25–27, 42; 12:44; 17:8, 21; 20:31
- b. The benefits of salvation can be experienced here and now (in this evil age), but will be fully known when He returns.
 - i. 3:18, 36; 4:23; 5:24; 6:39–40; 10:10, 26–29; 11:25–26

15. BELIEVERS MUST...

CONTINUE JESUS' WORK AND MISSION (April 19)

- a. Believers are called upon to continue the work of the Savior in order that all men may know and be saved.
- b. 4:38; 15:16; 17:18; 20:21–22

16. CONCLUSION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (April 26)