



THE WORD BECAME FLESH

STUDY GUIDE



SUMMIT VIEW CHURCH

i INTRODUCTION

If you haven't noticed, something overcomes most people as the calendar turns over into December. People spend an inordinate amount of time decorating their houses, shopping, baking, and countless other activities. This tells us that this time of year has some substance to it; a certain amount of significance that we must take notice of. We have moments of happiness, love, high spirits, and a connectedness to our family and friends.

Yet on the other hand, this time of year can bring about many negative feelings and emotions. December hits, and many of us wrestle with feelings of fatigue, stress, irritability, sadness, anger, or loneliness. In a study released from the American Psychology Association, many of us face these holiday stressors:

- **Lack of Time** - Not enough time to get things done whether personally, for the family, or due to the end of the year at work.
- **Lack of Money** - 74% of Americans fail to budget properly for the holidays. The average American goes over \$1,000 in debt this time of year.
- **Family** - Some of us have recently lost a loved one who won't be with us this holiday season. And don't get us started on the crazy in-laws.



- **Hype of the Holidays** – Crowds, shopping, parking lots. Simply writing this made me start to sweat.
- **Gifts** – Whether receiving gifts or getting the right gifts.
- **Diet** – Hello, stretchy pants.
- **Travel** – Packing, getting to our destination, the cost, the highways.
- **Children** – The burden to provide the biggest and best Christmas yet.

We often feel this way because our eyes have lost sight of what this season is meant to celebrate. This month at Summit View, our hope is to refocus our eyes, minds, and hearts, and allow us to enjoy the Advent season for what it's meant to be—a celebration of the birth of our Savior. We're going to do that by studying the first chapter of the Gospel of John.

The first 18 verses of the Gospel of John are often referred to as the prologue. In these 18 verses, one can't help but read and walk away with a high view of who Christ is and what exactly He has come to accomplish. This is what we celebrate at Christmastime. These verses have captured and captivated the minds of believers for all of Christendom. Our hope is that it will do the same for you this December.

“The incarnation means that for whatever reason God chose to let us fall...to suffer, to be subject to sorrows and death—he has nonetheless had the honesty and the courage to take his own medicine... He can exact nothing from man that he has not exacted from himself. He himself has gone through the whole of human experience—from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death...He was born in poverty and...suffered infinite pain—all for us—and thought it well worth his while.”

– Dorothy Sayers, The Greatest Drama Ever Staged

i INTRODUCTION

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has been specifically prepared with you in mind. It will help life groups grow deeper together in their relationships with God and one another.

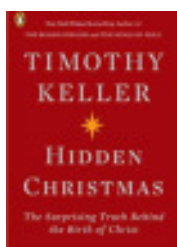
Each week there are conversation starters to help get things rolling, followed by questions for discussion based on the text. Each week wraps up with personal applications and things to pray for to help you grow spiritually.

We realize you may not be able to get to every question. Pick the ones that would best work for your group. Obviously, you are more than welcome to pull in other resources, or highlights from the sermons each week. Our hope is that by participating in this study, you will have a firmer grasp on the Scriptures and a stronger connection with Christ.

Additional Christmas Resources



Come, Let Us Adore Him: A Daily Advent Devotional by Paul Tripp



Hidden Christmas by Timothy Keller

To help you enter and reflect upon the story of Advent this year, we are providing a suggested Scripture reading plan for the month of December. The hope and prayer is that as you and your family reflect on God's Word this Christmastime, you will experience joy and awe as we celebrate our Savior. (Reading plan courtesy of Crossway.org.)

31-DAY READING PLAN

WEEK 1

Sunday	December 1	John 1:1-5
Monday	December 2	Genesis 3
Tuesday	December 3	Psalms 13
Wednesday	December 4	Psalms 24
Thursday	December 5	Leviticus 16
Friday	December 6	Jeremiah 31:31-34
Saturday	December 7	Hebrews 8

WEEK 2

Sunday	December 8	Isaiah 11:1-10
Monday	December 9	Micah 5:2-5
Tuesday	December 10	Zechariah 9:9-13
Wednesday	December 11	Jeremiah 23:1-6
Thursday	December 12	Ezekiel 34:11-16
Friday	December 13	Isaiah 9:2-7
Saturday	December 14	Isaiah 53

WEEK 3

Sunday	December 15	Romans 5:12-17
Monday	December 16	Hebrews 1:1-4
Tuesday	December 17	Isaiah 61:1-4
Wednesday	December 18	Colossians 1:15-22
Thursday	December 19	Philippians 2:1-11
Friday	December 20	Luke 1:26-38
Saturday	December 21	Luke 1:39-80

WEEK 4

Sunday	December 22	Luke 2:1-7
Monday	December 23	Luke 2:8-20
Tuesday	December 24	Matthew 2:1-12
Wednesday	December 25	Luke 4:16-21
Thursday	December 26	Revelation 21:1-5
Friday	December 27	Romans 5:6-11
Saturday	December 28	Galatians 4:4-7

WEEK 5

Sunday	December 29	Romans 5:6-8
Monday	December 30	Colossians 2:13-15
Tuesday	December 31	2 Corinthians 5:16-21



WEEK 1: THE ETERNITY OF JESUS

John 1:1-5

INTRODUCTION

When we read the phrase, “In the beginning”, our minds should immediately rewind to Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God...” The author, John, is drawing a clear connection here. It is as if he is allowing his reader to have a sneak peek at the last chapter of his book. He’s letting us know from the start that Jesus is God; he wants his audience to read everything that comes next through this lens. In the beginning, Jesus Christ was with God. Not only was He *with* God, He *was* God.

But the connections to the Old Testament don’t stop there. In five sentences of pure literary genius, John clearly reveals Jesus’ deity (verses 1-2) and unfolds the Gospel by speaking to creation (verse 3), the fall (verse 5), redemption (verse 4), and restoration (verse 5), in a way that would have triggered the imaginations and minds of his Jewish readers. John plays on the Messianic language of Word, life, and light, preparing his readers’ hearts and minds to understand that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

MAIN IDEA

Jesus is the source of life and our hope.

CONVERSATION STARTER

Q. When you know the outcome of a story or an event, how is your understanding of the beginning impacted or changed?



READ & DISCUSS: JOHN 1:1-5

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1 In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In him was life, and the life was the light of men. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Word (Verses 1-2)

Q. To the Jewish reader, *Word* would have brought to mind psalms like Psalm 33:4-6, or Isaiah 55:10-11. Read these Scriptures out loud and discuss them in light of John 1:1-2. What do they reveal about God? About Jesus? What do you see about God's plan?

Q. To the Greek reader, or someone familiar with the Greek way of thought, *Word*, or *logos* would have brought to mind the "rational mind that ruled the universe". He was telling them that Jesus Christ was this *logos*. Why do you think it's important to understand the cultural meaning of *logos*?



Life (Verses 3-4)

John is stating that Christ is the source and sustainer of all of life. He was not created; He is Creator, and all of creation points to Him. This is stated in both the positive and negative to make it clear that the world was created by the Word, Jesus Christ. Read Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:19-20, and 11:36.

Q. Why is it important to understand that Christ was not created?

Q. How do we see that all of creation points to Him?

Q. If you were to live in light of everything being from Him, to Him, and for Him, how would your life look differently than it does now?

Light (Verses 4-5)

Just as a tree or the grass needs light to live and grow, people also need light to thrive. This light is Christ. He is the source of life, our light, our hope. His light is our true hope because it shines (present tense, meaning it is still shining!) and the darkness cannot overcome it. Here, John is giving another glimpse of the future to come; Jesus has victory over Satan, sin, and death. This is our source of hope. He has overcome. Read Isaiah 9:2, 42:6-7; 60:1-5; Malachi 4:2.



Q. What stands out to you in these verses?

Follow Up: In these verses, what do you think John is doing by referring to Jesus as the “light of men”?

Q. Why is it important to know that the “light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it”?

Q. Do you live like you believe that Jesus Christ has overcome?

PERSONAL APPLICATION & REFLECTION

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Spend time this week meditating on the verses you read with your group. Focus on the goodness of God—that He not only provided a solution to the problem of sin through Jesus Christ, but that He told His people ahead of time what He was doing. Allow this truth to build your hope and trust in God.



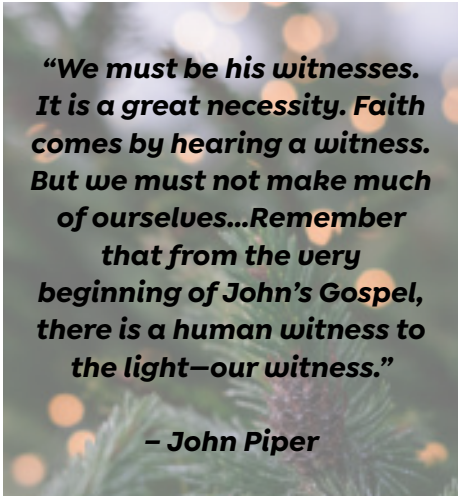
WEEK 2: THE LIGHT THAT SAVES

John 1:6-13

INTRODUCTION



A good witness with a truthful testimony is a powerful thing in a court of law. A friend making a recommendation about the latest movie or a new restaurant in town influences us to partake ourselves. In this passage, we read about a powerful witness to the truth of who Jesus is and what He has come to do.



MAIN IDEA



Jesus has come as the light that saves;
John bears witness to this.

CONVERSATION STARTERS



Q. When you hear of the words *witness* or *testify*, what images or particular people come to mind?

Q. What is the last thing someone tried to sell you on? Something that you must have, try, or experience?



Follow Up: What's the last thing you insisted on someone else to experience?

READ & DISCUSS: JOHN 1:6-13

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⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Q. In verses 6-8 and 19-24, we are introduced to John the Baptist. Briefly discuss what we know about him from elsewhere in Scripture. See Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:4-8; Luke 1:5-17.



WEEK 2: THE LIGHT THAT SAVES

John 1:6-13

Q. Verses 6-8 give a very clear description about the nature of John's ministry. What was the goal of his ministry? (See verse 7 - bringing salvation to all people.)

Follow Up: What type of message did he bring? (See verse 8 - a Christ-centered message.)

Q. As you read verses 10-11, what kind of reception did Jesus receive in this world?

Follow Up: Can you think back on a time in your life when Jesus may have incited a similar reaction for yourself?

Follow Up: Can you think of a time when you've shared Jesus with someone and they exhibited a similar response?

"When God comes among us there are always and only two possible consequences: judgement or salvation. There is judgement if we close our eyes to his coming or refuse to receive him. In that case, we are dependent on God's justice and mercy. Or there is salvation and healing if we welcome him with faith and trust."

- David Winter, Forty Days with the Messiah



Q. The title “child of God” is often thrown around, whether in our worship songs or casually in conversations. What does it mean? Look at John 1:10-13. What do these verses say to help us understand what it means?

Follow Up: What rights and privileges come with being God’s child?

Follow Up: According to this passage, what does it take to become a child of God?

PERSONAL APPLICATION & REFLECTION



In the Gospel of John, John is not interested in simply trying to chronicle the life of Jesus. He is trying to persuade his readers of the truth about Jesus, so they may become disciples of Jesus. In fact, the word *believe* (πιστεύω - pisteuó) is used 98 times in the Gospel of John--the first time in verse 7 and again in verse 12. In the common Greek (the original language of the New Testament), *believe* means “rely on, trust in, cling to, depend on”. As you reflect on your belief in Jesus, are you passively accepting Jesus as Savior, or are you “relying on, trusting in, depending on, and clinging to” Him?



WEEK 3: AMONG US

John 1:14-18

INTRODUCTION

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This week our passage brings us to directly to the Christmas story. At a specific point of time in history, God entered our world to bring about meaning, purpose, healing, and redemption. The way He did it was miraculous. He could have shown up in any form He chose, but He chose to come as an infant. This infant came to pay the penalty for our sins, remove the barrier between us and God, and bring us together. For God is with us.

MAIN IDEA

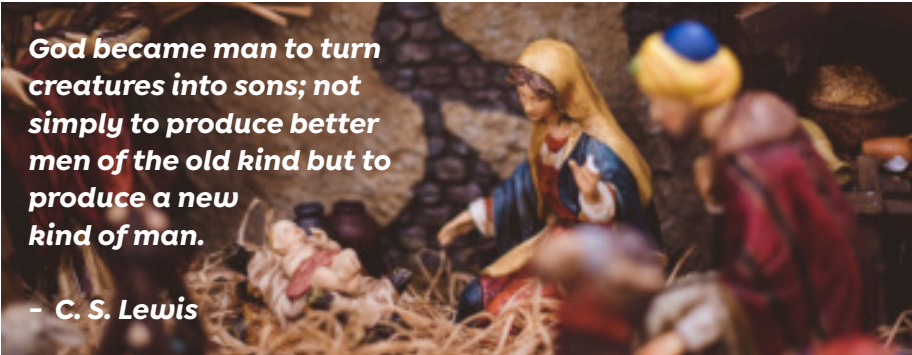
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God came and dwelt amongst His people.

CONVERSATION STARTER

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Q. Can you think of a time you when someone went out of their way to simply spend time and connect with you? Who was it and how did it impact you?



God became man to turn creatures into sons; not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man.

- C. S. Lewis



READ & DISCUSS: JOHN 1:14-18

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¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

Q. What makes the incarnation of Jesus so important to the Christian faith? Hints: He is Emmanuel, God with us (see Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23). He is the fulfillment of a long-awaited promise; God has entered into our world. The second person of the Trinity, being fully equal with God, emptied Himself of the divine role, lifestyle, and prerogative of being God to become fully human.

Follow Up: What does it communicate about who our God is?



WEEK 3: AMONG US

John 1:14-18

**At Christmas
Jesus punched
a hole between
the ideal and
the real, the
eternal and
the temporal,
and came into
our world.**

– Tim Keller

Q. The word *dwelt* in verse 14 is translated from the Greek word σκηνόω (skénoó), which means “to have one’s tent, dwelling, or tabernacle”. What other biblical imagery comes to mind when you read this?

Follow Up: Read the following: Exodus 33:7-11 and Revelation 21:3. What do these passages show and teach us about God?

Follow Up: With those passages in mind, what can we learn from John telling us about Jesus coming to dwell amongst us?

Q. Jesus, the Son of God, who existed in eternity past in perfect relationship with the Father and Spirit, left heaven to become one of us. What impact should that have on our life?



Q. Notice the difference in verse 17 between the Law and the arrival of Jesus. What are the main differences between the Law and what Jesus has come to accomplish?

Q. According to these passages, what aspect of God's character have been revealed to us in Jesus?

Follow Up: Why do we need grace and truth? What happens to grace without truth? What about truth without grace?

PERSONAL APPLICATION & REFLECTION

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Jesus made earth his destination so that our destination would be with Him in the new heavens and new earth. Take time to reflect upon this truth, thinking about what Christ gave up in heaven and what He had to experience to make this possible for us. Allow these thoughts and emotions move you towards awe and adoration of Christ this week.



WEEK 4: BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

John 1:29-34

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to ranking the top pot-stirrers and controversy-starters, John the Baptist must be toward the top of the list. The common man was drawn to him, while the religious leaders, priests and Levites, sought to find out just who he was and what he was attempting to accomplish. Yet, John's mission was not to draw a crowd or make much of himself, but to point everyone's attention to someone else. John was to prepare the way for Jesus. This week, let's allow him to do the same for us as we come close to our Christmas celebration.

MAIN IDEA

John's mission was to point others toward Jesus.
This is our mission as well.

CONVERSATION STARTER

Q. There are certain moments in life where we are overcome by someone or something. Picturesque views, the birth of a child, seeing your bride on your wedding day. Can you share a time in your life where you stopped in your tracks and attempted to take in all the wonder around you?

As God condescends to man and becomes man, man himself is exalted, not as God, or like God, but to God, being placed at His side, not in identity, but in true fellowship with Him.

- Karl Barth





READ & DISCUSS: JOHN 1:29-34

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John Testifies About Jesus

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

³² Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

Q. Look back at John 1:23. John identifies himself with someone the prophet Isaiah once spoke of. Turn to Isaiah 40:1-5. What is John the Baptist saying about himself?

Follow Up: What is he saying about Jesus? (See Hebrews 10:1:14).



WEEK 4: BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

John 1:29-34



Believing, then, is directing the heart's attention to Jesus. It is lifting the mind to 'behold the Lamb of God,' and never ceasing that beholding for the rest of our lives.

– A.W. Tozer

Q. One of the key components of John the Baptist's message is repentance (See Mark 1:4; Matthew 3:2). What is repentance and why is it essential for receiving Jesus?

Follow Up: How do these verses fulfill what we studied earlier in John 1:6-8?

Q. In John 1:29, John the Baptist declares who Jesus is and what Jesus does. Turn to Exodus 12:1-14. Of all the titles John the Baptist could have given Jesus, why do you think he chose "Lamb of God"? What does it mean for our sin to be taken away?

Follow Up: What is the one thing available through the Lamb of God that is not available in any other person, thing, or religion?

WEEK 4: BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

John 1:29-34



Q. What does it mean to “behold” something? What are a few practical ways in which we can do this today?

Q. In verse 30, John makes a claim about Jesus in relationship to everyone else. If you’re honest, do you share in this sentiment?

Follow Up: Do your life, values, behaviors, and thoughts correlate to this belief?

Q. Read Isaiah 11:1-2 and Ezekiel 36:27. How do these verses relate to John 1:32-34? How does this emphasize who Jesus is? What does this mean for us?

PERSONAL APPLICATION & REFLECTION

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John proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” As you celebrate Christmas this week, how can you behold the Lamb of God? What is the name of someone in your life who needs to hear this good news? How can we pray for them this week? Can we invite them to celebrate Christmas with us this week?

NOTES

NOTES



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