

The Gospel of John
Week One
John 1:1-28

Day One

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

vs. 1&2 – Many people recommend that new believers start reading the gospel of John. I always send them to Matthew, for I think John’s gospel is a difficult read. **Do you agree?** John started his gospel by talking about Jesus. If we assume that the writer is the apostle John, this should come as no surprise. Each gospel writer had a different audience and emphasis, but they all agreed on one thing: it was all about Jesus!

Jesus was and is the Word, who always existed and was with God and is also God. **Can you think of the significance that Jesus was the Word?** A word is the foundation for all communication; words contain the essence of meaning; there are words in every language; words are both spoken and heard; words often have more than one meaning. God spoke the world into existence, so there is power in a word to build up or tear down. You cannot see a word but it has existence. **Can you think of any other significance the metaphor of a word in reference to Jesus?**

v. 3 – Jesus was at creation, in fact He was and is the Creator! While some disagree, I always see this truth in the context of Proverbs 8, included here in part:

"The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world. I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind (Proverbs 8:22-31).

v. 4 – Jesus is the Word and He is light and His light brings life to men. Just as the sun’s light brings life to nature, so does God’s light bring life to men. It is a lie to believe that there is any life or benefit in darkness, yet that is where sinful man chooses to live. Light allows you to move with freedom and purpose, which is just what a proper relationship with the Word and Light does for each believer. John referred to this light later in one of his epistles:

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

v. 5 – Darkness cannot exist when light is present, for light dispels it. That is why darkness must shy away from light. **How effectively are you walking in the light that is yours? Are you seeing yourself and your situation properly? Are you seeing the reality of God’s love or is there some darkened recess of your mind that makes receiving the truth hard to comprehend?**

Day Two

6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

v. 6 – John wrote about another John, this one sent from God as a prophet. God had not “moved” or acted since Malachi but then He moved quickly to establish His purposes through Jesus. Ultimately, John the Baptist would lose his life in the service of God. **Why do I mention that here?** I do so because God willed John’s birth, established his life, preserved his ministry and then took John unto Himself. You have no need to fear accidents or an untimely death. God is in control. You were born with purpose and you will fulfill His purpose for you, if you choose to do so. When your purpose is finished, then so are you in this life. You can, however, thwart God’s purpose for you, as did the Pharisees:

But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John (Luke 7:30).

But if your heart is set to do God’s will, He will help you in every way; you need not fear missing Him or His will.

v. 7 – John came with the express purpose of bearing witness to the light. His objective was that men would believe in the light, which was Jesus. Jesus later referred to John as the greatest Old Testament prophet and that OT prophet came to introduce the New Testament focus, which was and is Jesus. Therefore the entire OT pointed to the new in Jesus.

Notice that John did not function through the Temple, but was apart from it, as was Jesus. There are still those who are enamored with the predictability, rules and routine of the Old Testament system and want to reinstate that through “sacrifices” and “offerings” of worship, prayer and sacrificial living and giving. While worship, prayer and giving are

important aspects of one's spiritual life, they cannot be performed with an OT mindset. What we do now, we do unto and because of Jesus, the Son of God. **Are you a NT person functioning under an OT frame of reference?** If so, you need to become a NT person through and through.

v. 8 – John had a “following” but he never became enamored with or attached to that following. He did not come to establish his own work, but to point the way to Jesus’ work. That attitude needs to be duplicated today, for many talk about Jesus, but it seems that the focus is squarely on them, their legacy and their personality. There was a time in my life where I gave the honor and attention to other men that I should have given to God. I determined a few years ago never to do that again and I repented of my sin. I also try to be careful not to receive the honor or attention that others should only give to God. I think this was what David tried to do when the men brought him the water from Bethlehem:

At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem. David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" So the three mighty men broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the Lord (2 Samuel 23:14-16).

Do you give or receive honor that only belongs to God? Don't answer too quickly. You may want to ask God if you do and, if He shows you that you have, then you need to repent like I did.

v. 9 – Jesus was and is not a light that gives light to *some* men. He is the light for all men. He is not a light among other lights; He is *the* light. This flies in the face of those who maintain that Jesus was a moral teacher or prophet who is the peer of Buddha or Mohammed. Jesus has no peer and John the Baptist came to let anyone who heard him know that Jesus was the Man from God.

When one mentions that Jesus is the way, the sinful mind immediately begins to ask all kinds of questions about what happens to children who die or to those who live in lands who have never heard of Jesus. While those are legitimate questions, the more important question is where the person asking those questions stands in relationship with Jesus.

Day Three

10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

v. 10 – There was one heretical theory that maintained Jesus was simply a phantom who appeared to be here, but really wasn't! That is preposterous! Jesus was fully God and fully man, and He became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus was the Creator of the world, yet His subjects and creation did not recognize Him. Sin had so hardened and blinded His creation that they went about their business, for the most part, and did not acknowledge His presence.

The world was looking for a Messiah with pomp and circumstance, but Jesus came humbly and with little fanfare. In fact, we are told in Isaiah 53 why it was hard for the world to recognize Him:

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isaiah 53:2-3).

v. 11 – Jesus was a man acquainted with grief and rejection, for those to whom He was sent rejected Him for the most part. **Are you not accepted or even rejected in some situation to which you have been called?** Then take heart! Jesus knows how you feel! What's more, He can help you with your pain for He felt what you feel.

For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:17-18).

v. 12 – Yet the Father did open the eyes of some and they did recognize and receive Jesus for who He was and is. For those blessed souls, Jesus opened the way for them to become children of God. You may ask: **Since God created all mankind, isn't He their Father by virtue of being their Creator?** The answer is no. He is their Creator but does not become their Father until they acknowledge His Son Jesus. So that eliminates the concept of the brotherhood of man.

I am not a brother with all my fellow human beings, only with those who know Jesus. They are my "natural" spiritual family because God is our Father through Jesus His Son. The world was and is estranged from God and Jesus is the only means by which that estrangement can be eradicated.

v. 13 – John was pointing out that becoming a child of God isn't a matter of a human decision. It is a work of God! The Jews were very proud of their tribal heritage and kept close track of their family tree. They could all trace their roots back to the patriarchs. That meant nothing, however, once Jesus came along. The only roots that mean anything to God are the roots and foundation you have in His Son, Jesus. And this is what makes the modern world furious when we insist that Jesus is the only way to God. They are willing to allow Him to be one way, but not the only way. Yet that is what John stated

and what the entire Bible says. Jesus is from God and the only way to God. It's that simple.

Day Four

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' " 16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

v. 14 – The Word made flesh – that is the greatest blessing the world has ever known. Its Creator who spoke the world into existence by the Word came into His world in the form of His creation, a form that they could understand and relate to. John reported that they saw His glory, the One who came from the Father. Much has been made and written about God's glory, and I don't want to be technical here. It seems that in this context God's glory is simply God in action!

Jesus was God's glory because He showed forth God's mercy and goodness. He was truth, not in some abstract way, but in practical ways that caused people to praise God and give Him glory for what Jesus had done. I just used glory in another sense that we give God glory – notice, adulation, praise – for the glory that He has shown in sending His Son to walk among us. The Greeks had gods that walked among them, but their gods were crazier than the people who worshipped them! Yet this Jesus was the epitome of perfection, full of grace and a perfect representation of the truth. Therefore, He was and is God's glory and we give Him glory for His glory!

v. 15 – John the author employed the help of another witness, John the Baptist, to confirm what John was writing. John the Baptist clearly stated that Jesus was the One, who was greater than John, which meant that Jesus was greater than the entire Old Testament system of worship and righteousness. How can I say that? I didn't, Jesus did.

I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28).

John spoke in a riddle of sorts when He said that Jesus surpassed him because Jesus, who came after John in birth order, existed before John. John bore witness to the fact that Jesus was the eternal Son of God! And He gave this testimony before Jesus ever did any great miracles. Jesus did not need miracles to prove His greatness; His miracles were done to help mankind and were an expression of His compassion and grace. John the Baptist did not testify that Jesus was a great man among men; John gave testimony that Jesus was the Son of God!

v. 16 – This establishes what I stated about verse 15. Jesus performed miracles and blessed people out of the overflow of who He was and is. He cannot help but do great

things because He is great. Jesus' actions flowed out of who He is, which is consistent with what He told his disciples.

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks (Luke 6:45).

If you want to do good, you must be good. Right actions begin on the inside. Those who want to try and do good without changing their inward parts are trying to do good in their own strength and God rejects their efforts, which is hard for many to comprehend. I cannot do good deeds from an evil heart, but only from a good one, which only God can touch and change. **Does that make sense?**

v. 17 – Moses was the most important leader in the OT for Jews. He gave them the Law that God presented to him. Both Johns were here announcing that a new era had arrived and a new leader greater than Moses had come to lead God's people. Remember what was said yesterday: John the Baptist and John the author did not function within the confines of Moses' Law and tradition, but rather from their recognition of and relationship to Jesus.

Day Five

18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. 19 Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. 20 He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." 21 They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No."

v. 18 – There are times when John seems to speak in riddles or at least about things that are hard to understand. I think that is a good thing to the extent that my finite mind cannot comprehend the things of an infinite God. If I can comprehend God, He is too small of a God!

First John says no one has seen God, but that God has made Himself known. That would seem to indicate that no man can make up His mind that he (or she) is going to see God; God reveals Himself to whom He wills. There can be no room for boasting, "I worked hard to find God!" **Are you grateful that God has revealed Himself to you? Do you look down on those who don't "know God"?** I hope not, for you "see" God by grace, and grace alone.

v. 19 – The religious leaders of John's day sent emissaries to inquire as to who he was. The Jews expected John to know and give an answer. **So what do you tell people when they ask who you are? Do you stumble for words, wanting to appear humble? Do you even know what your purpose is? Are you afraid to say it out loud?** The Jews expected John to have an understanding of his purpose and calling, which he did. **Do**

you? Is that kind of understanding restricted only to prophets and holy men (and women)?

When asked, John had an answer ready. You should do the same. My purpose is “to create order out of chaos.” I never have to go looking for chaos; God always sends it my way. **What situation comes looking for you?** That is a strong indication of what your purpose is.

v. 20 – First, John told them who he was not, because he knew that they were inquiring whether or not he was the Messiah. John was not a politician and he was not trying to build his ministry. He was direct and not evasive in his answer that he was not the Christ. When you know who you are, then you can also say who you are *not*. I can easily say that I am not a Sunday-morning pastor. I can pastor people, but running a church is not my purpose. **Can you tell someone who you are not? Then can you tell them who you are?**

v. 21 – The leaders pressed their investigation, presenting John with a menu of options as to who he could be. This tells me that the Jews were eagerly awaiting and searching for the Messiah. When John showed up and made such a “splash,” they immediately sent a team of investigators. John wrote that no man had seen God, however, so these Jews could not just “figure out” who John or Jesus were; God would have to show them. They are to be commended for searching and seeking, but they missed the whole process because they were not spiritual men with spiritual eyes to see.

John submitted to their interrogation, for he had come to give witness to the true light. He was true to his mission and purpose and was not going to build his own ministry or reputation. He had come to announce the Christ and that is what he would do. **Are you true to your purpose? How do you know? What evidence is there that you have been?**

Day Six

22 Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" 24 Now some Pharisees who had been sent 25 questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

v 22 – After responding “No” to all their inquiries, the delegation finally asked John who he was, so they could take an answer back to Jerusalem. This is an interesting question that all of us need to answer, **What do you say about yourself? What do you say about yourself? Who are you? What is important to you? What is your purpose? What can you do or be that no one else in the world can do or be like you? What answer would these men have taken back to Jerusalem about you? Is it difficult or easy for you to answer this question? If so, why do you think that is?**

v. 23 – John did not reply in his own words, but quoted Isaiah 40:3 to say that he was the one to come before the Messiah, preparing the people for His coming. It is interesting that Jesus also quoted Isaiah 61:1-2 when asked about His purpose for coming:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).

If John and Jesus quoted a passage to define their purpose, don't you think the same principle could apply to you? What is the verse or passage that defines your purpose? Mine is Genesis 1:2. It is that verse that helped define my purpose "to create order out of chaos." Paul also defined his purpose by using Old Testament passages in every one of his 13 epistles (those instances are available on my website for your review and study).

John knew who he was and what his purpose was. That is why it was so easy for him to say "no" to the original list of options presented by the emissaries. He could say "no" because he knew what his "yes" was. **Do you know what your "yes" is? What you are supposed to do at the exclusion of all else whenever possible?**

v. 24 – As best I can tell, baptism was not a strange concept to the Jews. They had purification rites for initiates to their faith and the Essenes, contemporaries of John and Jesus, used ritual bathing as a regular part of their daily worship. Yet the delegation was confused as to why John was baptizing, for all others baptized people "into" something or some movement (and most baptized or washed themselves).

John was baptizing as a symbol of repentance from sins, of a new cleanliness from sinful stains. John was being interviewed as to his credential and his actions, scrutinized by the establishment in Jerusalem. **Are you willing to submit to the same kind of scrutiny where your purpose is concerned?** If not, then you may not be ready for "prime time" on the stage of life. This is why I write and blog, so I can submit my work to public reply, correction and comment. **What are you doing to sharpen your purpose voice and message?**

Day Seven

26 "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. 27 He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." 28 This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

v. 26 – In the most recent presidential election in the U.S., both vice-presidential candidates did their best to keep the focus on the two presidential candidates. They did not speak for themselves, but for the one above them whom they represented. This is what John did. He turned the interview into an opportunity to talk about the One John was representing, the One whose way God had sent him to prepare. **Who do you**

represent in your purpose? It should be God, for He is the One who assigned your purpose and who empowers you to fulfill your purpose.

John's work is living proof that God will help you fulfill your purpose. John wore strange clothes, had an outlandish diet and did his work in remote desert areas. Yet all of Israel heard about him, found him (there were no road signs back then) and came to see him, most submitting to his baptismal ritual. God wants you to fulfill your purpose more than you do; that is why you are still here. He will meet you more than half way on your purpose quest, if you have faith and don't give up. For your quest for purpose starts by having faith that you have a purpose and faith that God is able to reveal it to you.

v. 27 – John had a clear revelation and understanding of who he was and who he was not. He understood his position in God's economy and that he was not the lead man, but had come to announce that the Lead Man was among the people at that very moment. What clarity! What focus! What a clear understanding of purpose! That is why John was so successful and that is the key to your success as well. I am not saying that you must have a public ministry that touches thousands to be successful. I am saying, however, that God does want to grant you a measure of success in your sphere of influence and work, which could be the block where you live.

John was the greatest prophet of the Old Testament according to Jesus, but John declared that he was not worthy to untie Jesus' sandal. That gives you an idea of how far superior Jesus was and is to any of the Jewish rites, or for that matter, any religious system that man can devise or structure. This reminds me of the scene that took place in Revelation:

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades (Revelation 1:17-18).

When Jesus shows up, people should fall down in worship. Your purpose is a great act of worship as you submit to and carry out the will of God for your life.

v. 28 – John the author positioned this encountered in the minds of the readers as taking place at Bethany. Not only do you have a purpose, but you have a sphere in which that purpose functions best. Much of my sphere is in writing and in Africa. **Where are you most effective? What is the stage upon which you perform your purpose play? Who is the audience?**

Your purpose will have its greatest affect as you meet the world's need where the world lives in a way that the world can receive. While John was eccentric, he was not a hermit and his work impacted the lives of his contemporaries and beyond. Are you willing to do the same thing and get your "hands dirty" by being in the world but not of it?