

Lesson 5





Where We're Going

By the end of the lesson, participants will: explore the meaning of the Word for the world; discover true inspiration for life in Jesus; and commit to living in relationship with Creator God because of the “light” (grace and truth) that Jesus gives.



The Creating Word Becomes Flesh

Debra sat watching Ms. Jean Sanders finish baking cookies. She was pulling trays of them from the oven while they talked. Debra enjoyed these conversations, even though she was expected to always address her mentor by her full name—something she didn't mind at all given their age difference. Ms. Jean Sanders had been Debra's mentor since she came home from college. The longer it lasted, the more Debra respected and cherished their relationship.

They were talking about the deep spiritual ache that Debra had been sensing for weeks. She hadn't really felt the ache as much as simply known it was there. Throughout that time, Ms. Jean Sanders was a good listener. She tried her best to pray for Debra and, when needed, to say something relevant.

“I hope this time passes,” Debra told her, slumping over a bit in her chair.

“God always helps you,” Ms. Jean Sanders said. Her back was to Debra. She slid the cookies from the baking sheet to a plate. “I once heard that.”

“Oh, yeah?” Debra nodded.

“But it was a little different. The deacon used to say that religion and faith in Jesus won't much help if Jesus won't help much.”

“Well, that deacon had good sense about himself,” Ms. Jean Sanders said with a chuckle.

“Have you ever felt this way, Ms. Jean Sanders?”

Turning from the kitchen counter to face Debra, she handed a cookie to her.

“Eat this,” she said. Her empty hand then found its way to her hip. She mumbled something and then said, “I don't believe I've felt exactly like you, Debra. But I've had my times of dryness, my times of darkness when I'd reach for Jesus and not feel Him.”

“That's it,” Debra said. “Like Jesus was in the room but when the lights went out, He left too.”

“Well, like that deacon said, Jesus will help. He'll be of help,” Ms. Jean Sanders said. “I can say that from my own experience. That won't help the ache inside you now, but at least you've got it on my authority that it won't last forever.”



Real Talk

1. What was the relationship Debra had with Ms. Jean Sanders?
2. What was Debra's problem she wanted wisdom about?
3. What encouragement did Ms. Jean Sanders offer?



The Players

Gnosticism. Many of the early Gentile believers had been exposed to varying strains of Gnosticism (an early heresy) and did not believe in the humanity of Jesus. As people from diverse backgrounds became part of the church, it became necessary for the apostles to correct errors in doctrine as well as encourage the existing believers. In the Gospel of John, the writer seems to be addressing a mixed audience of believers and unbelievers, Jews, and Greeks. The other Gospels had already been written and circulated. John used his writing not simply to tell stories about Jesus, but to explain Christian theology, especially the place of Christ Jesus.



Backstage

The author of the book of John identifies himself as “the disciple Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 19:26; 21:7, 20). Most scholars agree that the Apostle John is the author of this book. John was well-known in the early church and was intimately familiar with Jewish life. He would have been an eyewitness to many of the events recorded in the Gospel of John.



Make It Stick

“God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him” (John 1:3, NLT).



The Word (NLT)

John 1:1 In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He existed in the beginning with God.

3 God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.

4 The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.

5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

6 God sent a man, John the Baptist,

7 to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony.

8 John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light.

9 The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.

11 He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.

12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

Dating of the Gospel of John is a matter of debate, with dates ranging from AD 50 to 95 or later. However, most scholars accept the later date of AD 95. Although we may not know the exact date of the writing, we do know that the first-century church was thriving. Even amid the threats of persecution and heresy, the church continued to grow.

John wrote to encourage the believers, most of whom were Jewish. He affirms their Jewishness as well as their faith in Jesus Christ, contrasting them with the Pharisees, who claimed to be the true or real Jews. The first 14 verses of the book of John summarize the whole Gospel. In these verses, we are introduced to Jesus—who He is, what He does, and the role He plays in the eternal plan of God for the world.



Combing Through

1. Jesus Is the Word (John 1:1–3)

John introduces Jesus as the “Word.” The word used here is *logos*. The Greeks understood *logos* to mean not only the written or spoken word, but also the thought or reasoning in the mind. Jewish believers also used the word *logos* to refer to God and would have connected this concept to the wisdom personified in the Old Testament (see Proverbs 8). In tandem with wisdom was ability; in this case, God's wisdom was used to create the universe. Jesus is that wisdom personified. Through Jesus, all things were created. To understand the creation, we must know the Creator. All of these concepts are bound up in the word *logos*.

As believers today, we may not realize all the nuances that the author intended. But what we must learn is clear: Jesus was, is, and always will be. He is God. He is the Creator and the Source of all life. The entirety of our Christian faith rests upon accepting these truths.

How have you seen loaded words used or abused in your life?

2. Jesus Is the Light (vv. 4–9)

John speaks of Jesus as “the light.” Jesus is Life itself, and that Life is our Light (v. 4). When we receive this life Jesus offers, His light replaces our spiritual darkness, and we become more like our Creator. However, many people live in deep darkness, which often connotes sin in the Bible. Even though Jesus is the light to dispel darkness, many people refuse to accept the light of salvation. It's the same today. People are so thoroughly entrenched in their sin and ignorance that they are blind to the light.

God can use anyone to pierce through the darkness. In Jesus' time, God sent John the Baptist to bear witness to Jesus (vv. 6–7). John the Baptist did not want people to believe in him; he pointed the way to Jesus. Today, God uses His written Word and the power of the Holy Spirit to testify to the Light. He also uses believers. Every believer should view himself or herself as a testimony to the truth of salvation through Jesus Christ.

What has the Light of Christ made clear to you?

3. Jesus Reveals God's Character (vv. 10–14)

Although Jesus created the world (Colossians 1:16), the world did not recognize Him as Savior (John 1:10). Jesus came to the Jews first, but most of them rejected Him as their Messiah. His gift of salvation is offered freely to all. When we do receive Jesus, God gives us the right to become His children (v. 12), not physically, but spiritually. We are considered His heirs (Galatians 3:29), eligible to receive all of His promised blessings.

We cannot become God's children by any means other than through salvation in Jesus Christ whom God sent to the Earth to take on human flesh. He came to live with us, to feel our pain, to experience our joy, and to know our sorrow.

John's Jewish readers would have understood the word “dwelt” (John 1:11, KJV) to be connected to the word for “tabernacle,” where God's presence dwelt. As modern-day believers, we can't physically touch Jesus, yet we can see His glory. We can testify to the miracles He has worked in our lives and the lives of others. We can bear witness to the power of salvation.

Why did Jesus need to become a human to understand humanity?



Diving Deeper Quiz

1. What role did the Word have in Creation?
2. How does John talk about darkness and light?
3. To whom did Jesus go when He came?
4. What words do you use to describe Jesus?
5. How have you seen people in your life respond to the Word?
6. In what ways have you responded to the Word of God?
7. Have you ever felt spiritual darkness? If so, how did you handle it?



Next Steps

Spend some time meditating on John 1. What stands out to you about this Scripture? How does it encourage you? How does it give you perspective? How does it challenge you? Take some time and

write down what you hear in your spirit, feel in your body, and think about John 1.



Say Word?

Preexistence. Pre-ex-IST-ens.
Incarnation. In-car-NA-shun.

SWAG

(Spiritual Wisdom and Guidance)

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

