



John (So That You Might Believe) (Week 1/12) Word Made Flesh

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *As we begin a new series, how do you think you could best prepare for it?*

Warm-Up

1. When did you *become a follower of Jesus* or *when did you first know that you were a follower of Jesus*?
2. How familiar are you with John's Gospel? What's John's agenda for writing? (cf. John 20:31)
3. What are the 'signs' in John's Gospel? How do they help show us who Jesus is?

Read John 1:1-5

4. What are the opening words of John's Gospel? What do they mirror? Why is this important?
5. Who is the Word? What is the Word like? When did the Word begin?
6. If Jesus is eternal, what are the implications for us? What is the implication for the whole world?
7. What do people believe is 'behind' the universe? Why is it such good news that at the heart of the universe is not a principle, but a person?

Read John 1:6-14

8. How was Jesus received when he came into the world? *Is recognising Jesus the same as receiving him?*
9. Can you think of the range of responses that Jesus received? How do you witness those today?
10. Why does a saving faith require both a recognition and reception (through belief) of Jesus?
11. What do you think helps people be moved to belief in Jesus? How should that shape our prayers?
12. As people believe, what right does God give them? What does it mean to you to know that you have become a child of God in Christ? How do you enjoy that relationship day-to-day?
13. How human did the Son become? What evidence do we have that the Son was not merely masquerading or pretending to be a human, but truly human?
14. Do you think people struggle more with Jesus' humanity or divinity? Why do you think that is the case? Do you ever emphasise Jesus' humanity over his divinity (or vice versa)? *What could be the effect?*
15. How is God becoming human a big 'YES' to our humanity and physical world? How is it a 'YES' to us?
16. What does John mean by the Word making his dwelling among us? *How is it related to the tabernacle?*
17. What are the implications of Jesus dwelling with us? What significance does that have for you?
18. Who has seen God? When we look at Jesus, what do we see? Why do people need to know this?
19. What are the ways that people try to "find God"? How is it through Jesus that we can meet with God?

Apply *Who are you praying for that they would recognise Jesus and believe in him?*

Pray *Our heavenly Father, we thank you that you have made yourself known to us in Jesus Christ. Help us more today to see the glory of the only Son and to learn to love you more. May we also be like John, in testifying to the coming of the light of the world, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

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Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Front Line this Week

What role or task do you need the Bible's wisdom for this week?

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* “In the Beginning” by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/in-the-beginning/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Come Home” by Vaughan Roberts:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/come-home-2/#sermons>
- *Read (article):* “Athanasius on the Simple God And Eternal Generation” by Steven Wedgworth:
<https://ca.thegospelcoalition.org/article/athanasius-on-the-simple-god-and-eternal-generation>

Series Resources

- *Read:* “John: An Expository Commentary” by R C Sproul.
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Don Carson.
- *Read:* “The Message of John” by Bruce Milne. 📖
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Leon Morris.
- *Read:* “John for Everyone: Part 1” by Tom Wright. 📖
- *Read:* “Can We Trust the Gospels?” by Peter Williams. 📖
- *Watch:* “John” by the Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-john/>
- *Previous Series* from St Bart’s (including Children’s Resources):
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/jesus-is>
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/i-am>
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/truth-glory>

📖 Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

JOHN (SO THAT YOU MIGHT BELIEVE)

*Week 1/12 “Word Made Flesh”
by the Rev’d Adam Lowe (01/02/2026)*

말씀이 육신이 되다 | Gö Wēt Yä Riq |
道成了肉身 | வார்த்தை மாம்சமானது

Bible Passage: John 1:1-14

*Eternal God, thank you that you have revealed your glory to us in your Son.
Please help us to recognise and receive — to believe, in him. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

In recent times, one of the members of our household has become quite the Star Wars fan. So that means, every time it is their turn to choose what we do on our weekly family night, you can just about guarantee that it will involve watching one of the Star Wars movies. I know there’s controversy about what is truly canonical when it comes to those movies, and fairly strong opinions about what order you should be watching them in, but as we started chipping away at all nine movies, it was in a *very rough order*. *At least that’s the way it started*. It was chaos. / All throughout the movie there are questions flying about who this is, what their connection is with another, and what has precipitated and preceded an event. // Confusion reigned! But finally — *as we’ve gone back to the beginning, to watch some of the prequels, the movies which fill in the backstory, in fact give us the origin story about what set everything in motion, things have begun to make sense*.

The Gospel of John does that in the most spectacular way but about Jesus. / Whilst:

- *The Gospel of Mark* launches with Jesus’ baptism and thrust into ministry.
Luke steps back with the foretelling of John the Baptist’s birth.
Matthew goes further by opening with Jesus’ genealogy. /
Well John, John stretches right back *to the very beginning*. /
- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. /
- *If this was a star wars movie, John 1 would be the opening scrolling words of the first episode.*
- It’s like John is saying, that if you truly want to understand who this Jesus is, the one who lived, died, and rose again, *then you need to look right to where things started, for a proper perspective*. / Because not only was he there, *but he is at the centre of the creation and recreation of everything*.

John wants us to *recognise who Jesus is*. / Not just for interest's sake, but because he longs that we would receive Jesus, that we'd become believers. / That's John's agenda.

- It's not a hidden agenda — or one we've cleverly deduced or read into his words.
We know it's John's purpose for writing because he tells us in chapter 20, verse 30...

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

- John's goal is that we would become believers. /
- One of John's favourite ways of helping us to become believers, is by providing an account of various signs by Jesus that point to who he is.
- They're not there to impress or entertain us, but to make believers out of us.
- Not to believe anything, but that Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son.
And that by believing in him, that we would have life in his name. /
- So if you're not sure what you think about Jesus, this is going to be a great opportunity to consider the signs and examine the claims about Jesus in the lead up to Easter.
- And if you are a believer, it's the most wonderful opportunity to strengthen your belief by having a fuller view of Jesus. // But today, as we begin with the beginning, as John sets this grand and fitting stage, he introduces to the Word. God's Son. And we discover:
the WORD Eternal, the WORD Received, and the WORD Made Flesh.

THE WORD ETERNAL | VERSES 1-5

영원부터 계신 말씀 | Wēt dē Wēi | 永恒的道 | வார்த்தை மாம்சமானது

First, **THE WORD ETERNAL**. That is who Jesus is. *Verse 1...*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

When John refers to the 'Word' here—*logos* in the original language—he is talking about Jesus.

- When Greeks heard *logos*, *they would have immediately recognised it as a philosophical term*, relating to the rational principle behind the ordering and meaning of the universe.
- They observed and recognised that the universe had some sort of order and cohesion, *and therefore deduced that there must be some sort of fundamental principle beneath it all*.
- Of course people think that today, too. They come up with all sorts of ways to describe it. The problem—of course—is that no one can agree on what that principle is.
- But John is moving us to see that at the heart of the universe is not a *principle* but a *person*.
- When the Jews heard 'Word', when they heard *logos*, they wouldn't have thought of a concept like the Greeks, but that the "Word of God—as Bruce Milne puts it—*is God himself in creative action*".

- It's no coincidence that John's opening words match the opening words of the Bible.
- Of Genesis. / It was common for the books of the Jewish Bible, our Old Testament, not to be known by the title as we know it, Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, etc. but by the first words of that book. So when John says, "*in the beginning*", there would have been no confusion of the grand claim that he is making.
- John is saying: that the ordering power behind all of existence, is not an *impersonal* and *abstract* principle, *but a knowable and active person*.
- The Word, who creates, reveals, gives understanding, judges, and saves.
- The Word who wasn't just present but was the cause.
The Word who isn't just living but is the source of life.
The Word who wasn't just with God but is God.
The Word who wasn't just at the beginning but is himself eternal.
- I can find it difficult sometimes to *remember* what happened yesterday, let alone begin to fathom and imagine what it was like before the dawn of space and time.
- But whatever it was, however beyond my limited potential for understanding, I do know WHO was. The Word was. The Word, as we come to know revealed as God's Son, is not an afterthought, a late arrival, or a step down from God the Father nor Spirit. He is not inferior nor subordinate, *but shares equally and has existed for all eternity with God*.
- *It's why Athanasius, as he sought to address some of the false teaching of the fourth century, said, "There never was a time when the Son was not"*.

- The Word is from eternity to eternity.
- Unchanging and continuing. Continuing and unchanging.
- It's not a mystery who that is. God hasn't left us bumping around in the dark.
- As light dawned at the creation of the world by God's Word,
The Word has entered into our world, into the thick of our darkness.
- Not only exposing what is wrong: with our world but also with our hearts,
but in order to overcome that darkness and bring us life.
- A new day dawned in him. It's amazing. //

We live in a world in which everything seems increasingly fleeting.

Stars fade. Our lives are short. Social media lasts seconds.

Time slips through our hands and we struggle to have a firm foundation upon which to stand.

But John is calling us to see and put our trust in the one who is forever. /

- He can't just be one voice among many. He is the Eternal Word.
- If he was before creation, *then all of reality can only make sense in **relation** to him.* / *Actually, in relationship with him.* / *The difference is between a principle and a person is that: You can only know *about* a principle, but you can get to know—and be known—by a person.*
- You might absolutely love the principle of cause and effect.
That actions produce consequences. You might study it, observe it, get excited by it.

THE WORD RECEIVED (OR REJECTED) | VERSES 6-13

영접받은 말씀 (또는 거절당한) | Wêṭ biī Lōim (Kā Rēēiī) | 领受 (或拒绝) 道
வார்த்தை ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளப்பட்டது (அல்லது நிராகரிக்கப்பட்டது)

- But you know what the principle of cause and effect will never do: it won't love you back.
- Jesus—the eternal WORD—came into our world, inviting us to respond to him.

We're faced with a choice: To **RECEIVE OR REJECT him**. Verse 9...

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. *Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

John, *the author of the Gospel*, has just made the point that life's work of another John, John the Baptist, was to witness and point to the light coming into the world. To Jesus.

- It's not a mystery — he's the one who said, *I am the light of the world!*
- But the completely preposterous situation is *that*:
even though he was in the world — Jesus showed up in person;
even though he is the creator of the world — all things were created through the Word;
even though he came to his own — Jesus was a Jew and came to his people;
John says, they did not **recognise** him and they did not **receive** him.

John isn't saying that no one *recognised* or *received* him — some Jews and Gentiles did.
But incredibly, *most didn't*. *The case is the same today.* //

I think it's instructive that as think about what it means to *recognise* and *receive* Jesus, we witness at least four types of responses in the Gospels.

The *clueless*, *curious*, *condemning*, and the *committed*.

- Those who are **clueless**: they neither recognise Jesus nor receive Jesus.
Those who are **curious**: they recognise him at some level, *perhaps intrigued by his teaching, his signs, or his way of life*, but they don't want to receive him as their King. Indifferent.
Those who are **condemning**: they recognise the gravity of Jesus' claims, *but ultimately reject him, even seek to kill him.*
- And then there are those who **commit**: for they not only recognise who Jesus is, putting *away their offense, moving beyond their indifference, and they receive him, they believe in him.* /
- Note the connection that John makes between receiving Jesus and believing in him.
Verse 12: *Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name.*
- To believe doesn't just mean *believe that his name was Jesus.*
Or to *believe that there was a person called Jesus.*
But it's to *believe that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and God's Son.*
- The one who is not only our creator, but the one who came into our world, taking all of our darkness on himself, our sin, to rescue and redeem us.

Giving those who believe, *back to verse 12*: the right to become children of God.

- Not a reward that has been earned by us but a right given to us by God.
- If our relationship with God was like that of a boss and worker, we'd always be on edge and never know where we stood, or how long it would last. With a boss, if we're not performing, eventually, we'll be cut loose.
- But with God as our Father, a good and perfect Father, *our relationship with him is secure because of his love that has already been poured out for us.*
- This new status is not like a wage that we've earned, but a gift that has been given and received.
- Note that John goes to the trouble to emphasise that this new status, as God's children, has nothing to do with our own efforts because he doesn't want us to be mistaken.
- *That's why he says, children not born of natural descent, nor human decision, nor husband's will... but born of God!*
- You can take as much credit becoming a Christian as you can for being born. There's no room for arrogance and every opportunity for humble gratitude.
- It means we have the most extraordinary freedom to come to him, to know him, and to be secure in his love forever.
- But it requires a response. That's John's hope for us reading his Gospel. That we recognise Jesus and respond to Jesus.

THE WORD MADE FLESH | VERSE 14

육신으로 오신 말씀 | Nää cii Wēt yää Rin | 道成了肉身 | வார்த்தை மாம்சமானது

The **WORD MADE FLESH.** Verse 14...

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

When you see the word 'flesh', you might immediately think of how it's used in other places in the New Testament to mean something like works of the flesh, meaning our sin.

- But of course that's not how John is using the word 'flesh' here in reference to Jesus.
- *In fact—here—it's just about as blunt of a way that you can say:* that God's Son really—*truly*—became a physical human being. Like you and me.
- Yes, he was still God, but completely, totally human. He doesn't pick between divine and human. /
- Whilst in our world, people can have more trouble accepting the idea that Jesus was God, in the ancient world at John's time, some had more trouble accepting Jesus was human.
- People found it far easier to think that this was just God pretending to be human, or putting on the appearance of being human, just sort of faking it, but not really human.
- They couldn't fathom why God would want to get messed up with humanity!

- But John is saying: make no mistake, Jesus is fully God, but also fully human. He became really human in every way.

We see the evidence for that all through the New Testament.

- **Physically:** *he was born, grew up, spent decades in ordinariness, ate, drank, slept, wept, died.*
Emotionally: *he experienced grief, joy, sorrow, and anger.*
- Jesus wasn't masquerading. It's not some elaborate trick or costume.
- This isn't God just *dressing up*; *doing* a flyby of humanity; or *dipping* his toe into our world.
- But this is God plunging himself into humanity, *into our experience*.
With all our human frailty and vulnerability. Even death.
- He became a permanent human. This wasn't a temporary measure.
- The Son remains human—at the right hand of the Father—to this day. /
- **Because he's God**, he lives, he knows us intimately, there's no limit to his capacity.
You can't overburden God, he doesn't get compassion fatigue, he has no beginning nor end.
- **But because he's also human**, it means that he can identify with us in every way.
He knows our struggles and our joys. He's not distant nor aloof.
And he's interceding for us today.
- He's not *distant*, and his *desire* is to be in relationship with us.

The Word became flesh and made his *dwelling* among us.

The word dwelling here means to 'pitch a tent'.

- That might sound a bit temporary or fleeting.
- *We went camping with some friends a couple of weeks ago and that was for only two nights!*
Our temporary abodes were set up, and two days later they were taken down!
- But when John says, the Word became flesh and *made his dwelling among us*,
pitched his tent among us, it doesn't carry a connotation of being temporary,
or that God thought it might be good for a bit but secretly couldn't wait to get away.
- But this is more that God is **settling down** with his people.
- This is tabernacle language.
- The tabernacle, *later the temple*, was the place in which God was present with his people.
The tabernacle, *later the temple*, was the place where the people met with God.
- It's the place where his glory was made known among them.
- But the extraordinary news that we're being pointed to here,
is that it is because of God becoming flesh,
that the way that we can meet with God,
is not in a place *but in the person of Jesus*.
- Not the idea of Jesus. But in the person of Jesus.

- Jesus is not an idea to be grasped, but a person to be known.
 - Jesus, who is alive, and reigns forever, revealing God's truth and grace.
He's full of God's truth and grace, so that's what you get when you go to him.
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When Bettrys and I lived in Durham in the UK, one of the great joys was making two wonderful friends who had also recently moved there from overseas. When we first met them they were expecting twins, and when those twins finally arrived — they gave them the two most beautiful names.

Wei-Lei and Jit-in, meaning TO KNOW TRUTH and TO KNOW GRACE. *Their inspiration was John chapter 1.*
TO KNOW TRUTH and TO KNOW GRACE. To know JESUS, was their greatest hope for their kids.

If when you look at Jesus, you're looking at God, what greater thing *could you hope for?*

People look in all sorts of places, and attempt all sorts of things, in order to meet with God.

- But the wonderful news is that we don't need to fumbling around in the dark.
The light has come, God has revealed himself to us,
and done everything necessary that we can meet with him.
- When you look at Jesus, you are looking at God. /
- I really want to encourage you that if you're not sure what you think about Jesus, about his claims, his life, and his death, come along to Alpha starting this week.
- Whatever you do, don't just stay curious, push in, and explore the claims. //

- When John says, that “we have seen God's glory, the glory of the one and only Son,”
he likely has in mind the ultimate demonstration of Jesus' glory, in his death and resurrection.
- That's the greatest sign that the world has ever known.
But it's not only a sign, it's the path Jesus tread to make a way for our forgiveness. /
- Beholding the glory of Jesus isn't just seeing something you never have before.
Beholding his glory is receiving the one that you need.
- The one who said:
I am the bread of life.
I am the light of the world
I am the good shepherd.
I am the resurrection and the life.