

Faith

FAITH IN THE WORD OF GOD

Focal Verses • JOHN 1:1-14

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: EXPLORE the meaning of the Word for the world; FIND true inspiration for life in Jesus; and LIVE in relationship with Creator God because of the “light” (grace and truth) that Jesus gives.

In Focus

Sister Selena is a gifted Christian who serves on her church’s Board of Trustees. However, this was not always the case. She is a recovering alcoholic who used to abuse her husband verbally. After years of tolerating Selena’s behavior, her husband had finally had enough. Selena arrived home drunk as usual one weekend and found her husband and his possessions gone.

Selena had been miserable without him. One of her coworkers, Chanel, noticed her downward spiral and invited Selena to join her and her mother, Lottie, at church the following Sunday. After service, they all went out for lunch together. Lottie asked Selena what she thought about attending church with them more often. Selena said she probably wouldn’t be able to make it. Lottie pressed her, and Selena confessed she felt uncomfortable going to church when her life was so messed up.

Lottie told her about the life-changing relationship she had with Jesus. “Everything changed when I decided to place my faith in Jesus Christ,” Lottie told Selena. Selena could see their life was glorious from the testimonies that Lottie and her daughter shared. Then Lottie asked Selena if she wanted to become a new person in Christ. Right there in the restaurant, Sister Selena gave her life to Christ. She no longer drinks; she and her husband are reunited and happy as you see her today. Sister Selena did not just turn over a “new leaf.” She became a new person in Christ.

How would your life have been different if you didn’t have faith in Christ?

Keep in Mind

“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”
(John 1:3, KJV)



Focal Verses

KJV **John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by 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 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The People, Places, and Times

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. Gnostics sprang up in the Roman Empire at the same time as the Apostles were spreading the Gospel. They believed that the physical world was bad and that only the spiritual world was good. Gnostics did not believe that salvation came by grace through faith in Jesus, but that only select people with secret “knowledge” (Greek *gnosis*, as in Gnostic) were saved. Gnostics also taught that Jesus was not God, but just one of many gods in one of the many realms of existence. 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 to simply tell stories about Jesus, but to explain Christian theology, especially the place of Christ Jesus.

Background

The author of the book of John identifies himself as “the disciple whom 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.

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.

At-A-Glance

1. Jesus Is the Word (John 1:1–3)
2. Jesus Is the Light (vv. 4–9)
3. Jesus Reveals God’s Character (vv. 10–14)

In Depth

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” 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?

Search the Scriptures

1. Who is the “Word” (John 1:1)?
2. What is the “light of men” (v. 4)?

Discuss the Meaning

Jesus came to give meaningful, real life to all who will receive Him. He is the living revelation of God, who expressed God’s truth in a way we can understand. It is our task to share this light with others. What are effective ways to be witnesses to Jesus’ light today?

Liberating Lesson

Jesus came into this world in the form of human flesh, yet those around Him did not acknowledge Him for who He is: God. They chose to continue living in darkness rather than receiving the Light. Things aren’t so different in our world today. In modern society, many people have become accustomed to a fast-paced, hectic lifestyle. They are easily distracted, often bored, or generally dissatisfied with life.

Jesus came to free us from the rat race. His light reveals that we are in fact human beings, made in the glorious image of God. Jesus’ light burns away our ignorance and reveals our worth. It is then up to us to embrace that worth instead of taking the darker, but easier, path.

Application for Activation

This week, ask God to reveal Himself to you in a new way. Spend time praying, reading the Word, and meditating on what you have read. Let God’s Word permeate your spirit so that you might know God more deeply. Rejoice in the fact that God has revealed Himself to you through Jesus, the Word made flesh, and that He will continue to do so.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993. 261.
Tenney, Merrill C. *Expositor's Bible Commentary (John and Acts)*. Electronic edition. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelin. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1992.
Vincent, Marvin R. *Vincent's Word Studies, Vol. 2: The Writings of John*. Electronic edition. Hiawatha, IA: Parsons Technology, 1998.

Say It Correctly

Incarnation. in-car-NA-shun.
Gnosticism. NOSS-tih-siz-um.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 239

Mark 2:13–3:19
Psalm 97:8–12

DAY 240

Mark 3:20–4:34
Psalm 98

DAY 241

Mark 4:35–5:43
Psalm 99

DAY 242

Mark 6:1–6:44
Psalm 100

DAY 243

Mark 6:45–7:37
Psalm 101:1–5

DAY 244

Mark 8:1–9:6
Psalm 101:6–8

DAY 245

Mark 9:7–50
Psalm 102:1–11

Notes
