

Seeing the Light
John 1:4-13
August 17th, 2025

1. Shining of the light – God _____ (1:4-5)

2. Pointing to the light – John _____ (1:6-8)

3. Receiving the light – Humanity _____ (1:9-13)

4. Applying the Word
 - a. God wants to _____ you and be _____ by you.

 - b. You can become a _____ of God.

Seeing the Light

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 1:4-13

1. Read the entire prologue (John 1:1-18) From what you already know about the Gospel of John, what stories, themes, or teachings are introduced in the prologue that will be developed throughout the book?
2. Continuing to draw upon Genesis motifs, John speaks about Jesus as the “life” and “light” who has come to shine in a dark world. What do John 8:12 and 10:10 teach us about the life and light we receive in Jesus?
3. If you have different translations available, read v. 5 in several different translations (New American Standard, English Standard, King James, New International Version, etc.). How do they translate the ending of the verse?
 - a. In what way does the darkness of this world not overcome/comprehend/extinguish the light?
 - b. How does John 12:35-36 add more explanation to the concept?
4. What is John’s (the Baptist, not the other of the Gospel of John) purpose in vv. 6-8? How do we see John doing that in John 1:19-27?
5. According to verses 9–13, are all people already children of God? What does it teach about how to become a child of God? Where do you see God’s grace in these verses?

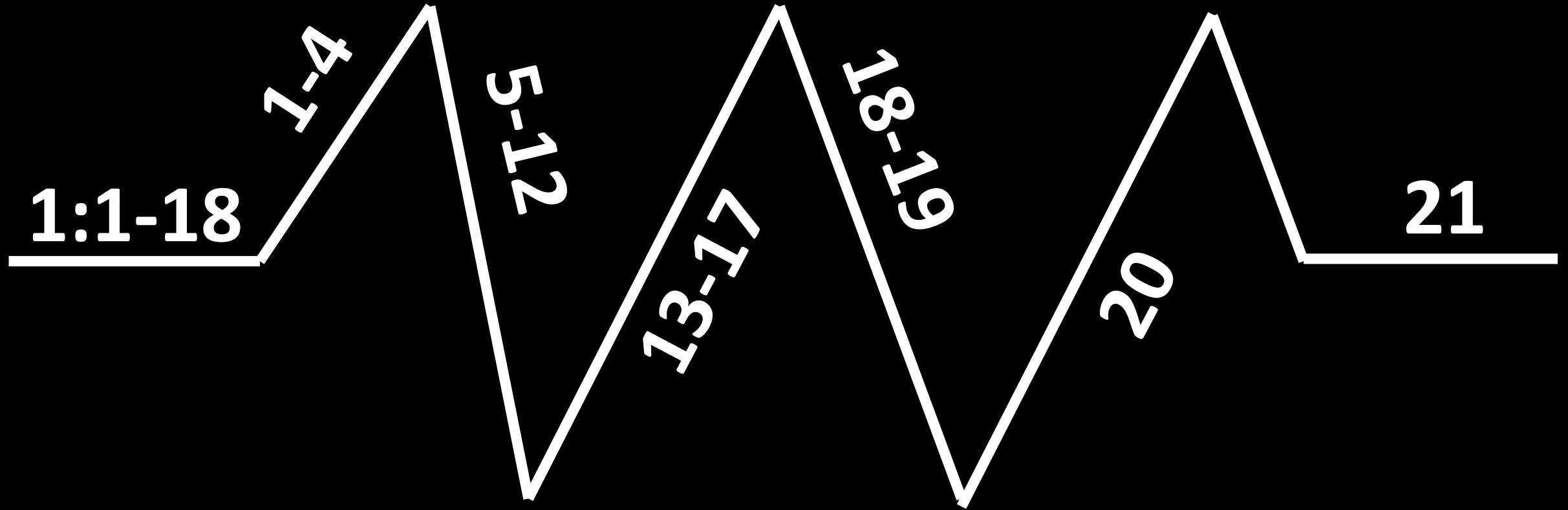
Some questions adapted from *Knowing the Bible: John* by Crossway

SEEING THE LIGHT

John 1:4-13

The Gospel of John was written so that you would believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah and Son of God. (20:30-31)

Belief



Unbelief

1. Shining of the light –
God *communicates*
(1:4-5)

John 5:26 "For just as the
Father has life in Himself,
even so He gave to the Son
also to have life in Himself;

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

2. Pointing to the
light — John *testifies*
(1:6-8)

3. Receiving the light – Humanity *responds* (1:9-13)

Matthew 21:33-39

Isaiah 53:2-3 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. ³ He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4. Applying the Word

a. God wants to
know you and be
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1 John 3:1a See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are.

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Big idea: Jesus is the true light which came into the world to be rejected or received.

Intro:

Every epic story should have a great introduction, a great beginning.

Daniel Nayeri's hilarious, surprising, and sad autobiography, *Everything Sad Is Untrue* has a great beginning.

"All Persians are liars and lying is a sin. That's what the kids in Mrs. Miller's class think, but I'm the only Persian they've ever met, so I don't know where they got that idea. My mom says it's true, but only because everyone has sinned and needs God to save them. My dad says it isn't. Persians aren't liars. They're poets, which is worse."

He follows a winding journey told from the perspective of a middle school boy who fled Iran when his mom became a Christian and ended up in Oklahoma in the 90's. He's proud of his Persian heritage but embarrassed at their cultural differences. At times you aren't sure whether he is telling a lie, misremembering events from his childhood, or telling shocking but true tales. The opening paragraph introduces you to his parents, his classmates, and the tension that runs through the book where you aren't always sure what to believe.

The first 18 verses of John are the introduction.

It sets the stage for all the major themes – Jesus as the light of the world, true life, who must be believed and gives reasons to believe in Him.

But many will not believe in Him, but will reject Him.

Theme of belief in John as a diagram – PPT

The Gospel of John was written so that you would believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah and Son of God. (20:30-31)

Prologue 1:1-18

Beginnings of belief 1-4 – John's testimony, wedding at Cana, Nicodemus, woman at the well

Development of unbelief 5-12 – plan to kill because of Sabbath and making self equal w God, feeds 5k, teaches, light of the world, heals the blind, Lazarus, enters Jer.

Strengthening of belief 13-17 – washes feet, teaches, prepares, prays

Jesus seeks to strengthen and confirm the belief of His followers in preparation for his death. Key idea is that of relationships

Consummation of unbelief 18-19

Rejection and crucifixion

Confirmation of belief 20

Resurrection

Responsibilities of belief 21 – feed my sheep

Remarkable truth that God wants to be known – He wants to communicate with you and know you.

1. Shining of the light – God ***communicates*** (1:4-5)

- a. Life and Light are two themes that run through John.
 - i. Jesus is the Light of the world (ch 8-9) but people love the darkness (ch 3)
 - ii. Jesus is the resurrection and the life in the scene where he raises Lazarus from the dead (ch 11)
- b. Beautiful language but not immediately clear – what is the life? In what sense is the life “the light of men?”
 - i. “Light” is both relatable and confusing.
 - ii. If we could plunge this room into total darkness, what would be your reaction?
 - 1. Fear, confusion, disorientation – you would be desperate to see and even a flicker of light from a match would push back the darkness and make things more understandable – Is this a chair in front of me or a child? Wait, whose hand am I holding? Which way is the door?
- c. Transitioning from the eternal existence of the Word and the creative power of the Word to His incarnation when He became a man.
- d. As the eternal Creator, He is the true source of all life – all being.
 - i. All life came into being through Him and is therefore dependent on Him
 - ii. **John 5:26** "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;
 - iii. Your life is a contingent life, it depends upon God giving it to you. But God’s life is in Himself.
- e. What is the light that shines but is not comprehended or overcome?
 - i. Is it the light of salvation? Conscience?
 - ii. Still in the context of bridging the gap between creation and the coming of Jesus.
 - iii. **Romans 1:20** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.
 - iv. Josh Moody - God has shown himself in creation: the light shines, and yet the darkness has not understood it or overcome it. There is in creation a light, a light of God, that shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness does not receive it. We naturally do not receive the light of nature, and yet that light shines, so that we are without excuse.
 - v. Last weekend wandering around the park playing frisbee golf in the cool shadows of the evening, trees were beautiful, the air was a perfect Idaho summer temp, zero humidity, drove home and the sky was blazing with the sunset. It’s the glory of God on display.
- f. How did the darkness respond to the light?
 - i. It did not comprehend it/overcome it.
 - 1. Some translations use “comprehend” (NASB) while others use “overcome” (ESV).
 - 2. *Katalambano* – comprehend or overcome
 - a. Translated as “understand” in Acts 4:13 where people were amazed at Peter and John because they “understood” they were uneducated and untrained men.

b. Used in 1 Thess. 5:4-5 about how the day of the Lord will not “overtake” us like a thief because we are sons of light not of darkness.

i. The use of “darkness” and *katalambano* translated as “overtake” seems significant.

3. Seems that both meanings are implied – As Creator Jesus is God revealing Himself in creation – the light is shining, present tense – so we are without excuse and then Jesus entered in to humanity as the light of the world – He came to His own and His own did not receive Him – but it also didn’t overpower Him. He was killed but even that could not stop Him.

2. Pointing to the light – John **testifies** (1:6-8)

a. John the Baptist is introduced here as sent from God as a witness to the light.

i. Luke tells us about John’s birth and family background. But that isn’t John’s focus in his gospel. He is typically more focused on the “why” and the theology behind the story.

ii. Clement of Alexandria, about 100 years after John, stated, “Last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain [in the other canonical Gospels] . . . composed a spiritual gospel.”

iii. John the Baptist’s ministry is briefly described here before giving the next section in the chapter over to him. His job was to point to the light.

iv. John says that the Baptist relates to Jesus the way the moon relates to the sun: “He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light” (v. 8). (Hamilton)

b. His purpose was to testify (give witness) to who Jesus is so that all people would believe in Him.

i. Purpose but not the result, because we soon learn that not all received Him.

3. Receiving the light – Humanity **responds** (1:9-13)

a. Jesus is the true light which enlightens every man (v. 9)

i. True – real, genuine

ii. Moves from creation to incarnation – the light that has always been shining in creation and conscience, bombarding us with the existence and reality and goodness of God – came to His creation.

iii. It doesn’t mean that every person is “enlightened” by Christ in the sense that Eph. 1:18 uses that of Christians. Rather it is the objective revelation of God made even more clear in the ultimate communication from God – God himself.

iv. In Daniel Nayeri’s book, a key moment is when Daniel’s father visits his classroom. His father stayed behind in Iran. Daniel often told his classmates about life in Iran and his family, but they seemed to the other kids to be lies. He told them how his grandfather was rich and had a walled garden and pomegranate trees and how he killed a bull, but the kids just thought he was making up stuff to impress them. And then his dad came and he was large and spoke broken English but he charmed the whole class, and he brought out a sticky tray of baklava, and confirmed Daniel’s stories.

1. The difference was when he came in person.

b. The tragedy begins in v 10 –

- i. Repetition of the word “world” for emphasis – in the world, made the world, the world did not know Him.
 - 1. The Greek gives even more emphasis on the word “world.” Greek is sometimes like Yoda-speak. The word order is different.
 - 2. In the world he was, and the world through him it was made, and the world him it knew not.
- ii. Narrows down even more – He came to His own – the Jewish people – His own people, the people that as God He had called out to Himself beginning with Abraham – and they did not receive Him.
 - 1. Jesus would tell a parable in Matthew 21 that shows he knew this would happen.
 - a. Read Matt. 21:33-39
 - 2. Isaiah predicted this
 - a. **Isaiah 53:2-3** For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. ³ He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
- iii. Receive is a key word in these verses – it mean to accept or receive with favor. Positively, it is paralleled with “believe in His name” in v 12. Negatively, to “not receive” is to “not believe.” It’s to say of Jesus – this isn’t who you are – you aren’t God – you aren’t the Creator – you didn’t come to save me – you’re a fake – and as we’ll see throughout John that’s exactly what many said about Him.
- c. But some did receive Him/believe in His name (v. 12)
 - i. And they were adopted in to God’s family – given the right to become children of God.
 - 1. Children who were born not in the normal way – natural descent, biological urge, parental decision – but of God.
 - 2. This will also be developed later in the book of John where Jesus famously tells Nicodemus in chapter 3 – you must be born again.

4. Applying the Word

- a. God wants to ***know*** you and be ***known*** by you.
 - i. He is actively shining that light through conscience and creation.
 - ii. He stepped from the glory of eternity and placed His feet in the dirt. He lived as you live – He got hungry, tired, thirsty. He was tempted, betrayed, hurt.
 - iii. And in the clearest communication of the character of God – justice, holiness, love, humility, sacrifice – He went to the cross as your substitute.
 - iv. He is the one that gives the soul-satisfying answers to the deep questions of life – questions about origin, meaning, morality, and destiny.
 - 1. Where did we come from?
 - 2. Why are we here?
 - 3. What’s right and wrong?
 - 4. Where are we going

b. You can become a ***child*** of God.

i. **1 John 3:1a** See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are.

1. As an even older man, John continued to write. Likely that 1 John was even later than the gospel of John, but you get in this letter a marveling that the Father has bestowed such a great love on us that we would be called the children of God – and such we are.

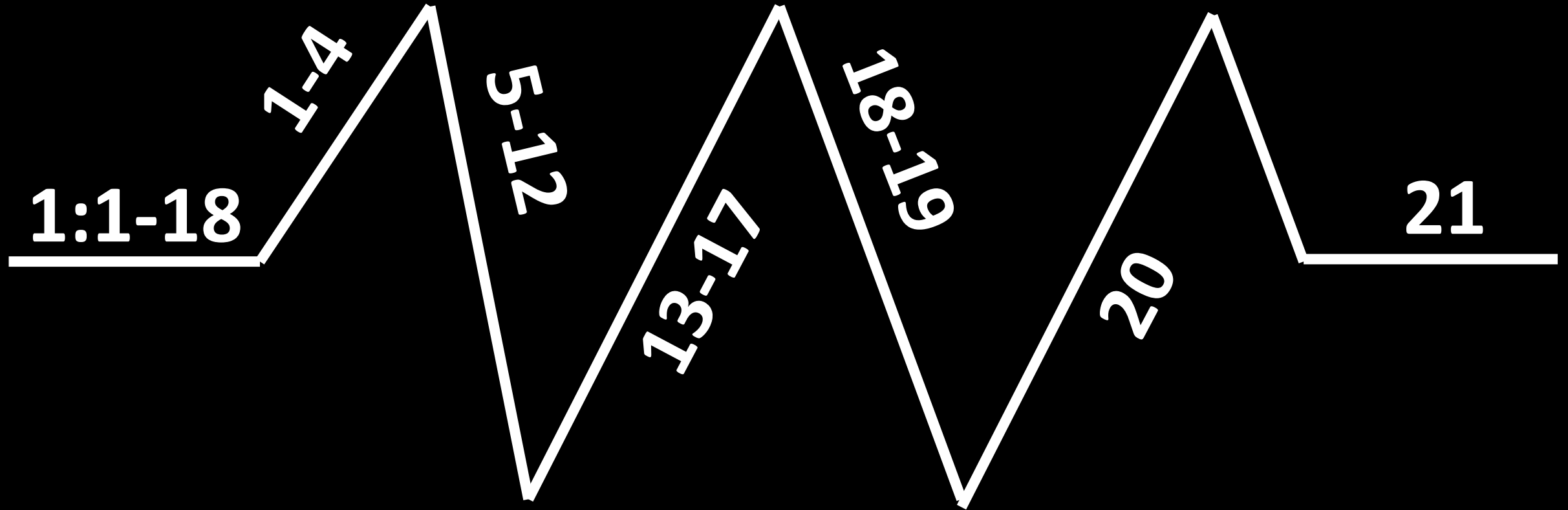
ii. Remember, the gospel of John is written so that YOU might believe.

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