

The Eternal Word
John 1:1-3
August 10th, 2025

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

1. Jesus was eternally _____ with God. (1:1-2)

2. Jesus is _____. (1:1-2)

3. Jesus is the _____. (1:3)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 1:1-3

1. As we start a series on the Gospel of John, do you have any favorite story or section from the book?
2. The Gospel of John has a different starting place than the other Gospels. Look briefly at the opening verses of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. What is unique about the opening of John's Gospel?
3. Compare John 1:1-5 with Genesis 1:1-5. What parallels do you see, and what do these parallels teach us about the message John wants his readers to hear?
4. Review the thesis statement from John 20:30-31. What's the stated purpose of the Gospel of John? How should it affect our reading of the book if we understand why it was written?
5. How is the word "Word" or "message" used in the following Old Testament passages: Psalm 33:6; Jer. 1:4-5; Is. 9:8; Ezek. 33:7; Psalm 107:20
 - a. How does that inform our understanding of John's use of "the Word"?
6. Have you encountered the Jehovah's Witness argument from John 1:1 before? Were you able to follow the response to the argument in the sermon? What additional points might you bring up in response?
7. What are the practical applications in your life of understanding that Jesus is the eternal God who created all things?

Note: Some questions adapted from *Knowing the Bible: John* from Crossway.

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Big idea: We must believe in the eternity and full deity of Jesus.

Introduction:

Several years ago I tried to read a biography on Douglas MacArthur called *American Caesar*. MacArthur was a famous WW2 general and influential figure after the war. It seemed like it would be fascinating, and it probably was, but it was also 844 pages long.

Book of John may be around 20 pages long, and yet the life of Christ is far more significant than Douglas MacArthur. Why is it so short?

It's not a biography. It was written for a specific purpose, highlighting certain events and teaching for a reason.

John 20:30-31 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but **these** have been **written so that you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing you may have life** in His name.

Who is it written for? For those who didn't see Jesus in person.

Only a small number of people in the middle east for a few short years were able to see Jesus in person. They could witness His miracles first hand and know who He was.

The rest of us would have been out of luck if God hadn't graciously provided a record of those events.

John was the last of the gospels written. Some of the early church fathers said that John was still writing in his old age. For a few reasons we date this book to around 80-90 AD, 50-60 years after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

That means some of the original eyewitnesses were still around but also we were on to our second and third generation of Christians.

Why was it written?

The Gospel of John was written so that you would **believe** that Jesus is the promised Messiah and Son of God. (20:29-31)

So that **you** may believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah, God in the flesh

Notice the second person emphasis – “you”

Places a demand on the reader to respond to who Jesus is – not just an intellectual discussion or description of facts. It was written to produce a response in the reader.

Desired response is belief

I encourage you to read through John and underline every time you see the word believe.

Nearly 100 times this gospel uses the verb “to believe.” It is used very purposefully because the purpose of this book is to encourage you to believe.

Result is life

“Life” is another theme throughout this book

This wasn't written to give you a standard to live up to. Not just trying to polish up people's behavior but bring real life, now and after death.

It is for that reason that these specific “signs” were recorded in John. Over 35 miracles of Jesus are recorded in the gospels, but John only has seven specific ones meant to point out who Christ really is.

Jesus is often misunderstood – downgraded to a mere man, a good teacher, a prophet, or a myth by some. Stripped of any humanity by others.

Even Christians sometimes have an inadequate view of Him – thinking of Him as simply their best friend or a distant, mystical person.

This book was written to show people who Jesus really is.

Theme of belief in John as a diagram – PPT

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

So who is He? John starts right in at the beginning.

Fred Sanders, a theologian who has written extensively about the Trinity and may be the funniest systematic theologian, describes this as if the gospel writers were in a competition to see who can go back the farthest in their introductions.

Mark 1:1-2 the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Matthew 1:1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

Luke 1:1-4 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³ it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; ⁴ so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

After 2 ½ chapters of rich detail, Luke gets to his genealogy and he goes back to Adam.

So John comes along and writes the last gospel to be written. Where does he start, “In the beginning.” He goes way back, back to the beginning of creation, back to eternity past before creation.

1. Jesus was eternally ***present*** with God. (1:1-2)

a. He is referred to as “the Word” in John 1.

i. Logos –

1. Greeks used it to describe the rational principle behind the world’s order.
2. stoics – logos to be the rational principle by which everything exists – all that exists has sprung from the seminal logoi

3. Philo – the ideal world – the logos of God – and the real or phenomenal world which is but its copy.
 4. But I don't think we have to dive into Greek philosophy to understand this. The OT is rich with language about the word as God's powerful activity in creation and revelation.
 5. God created with a Word in Genesis 1.
 6. **Psalm 33:6** By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.
 - a. Fits with His act of creation in v 3
 7. In addition to His creative power, "The Word" also refers to the way in which He spoke the Father's message to people.
 - a. **John 3:34** "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God;
 - b. **John 17:8** for the words which You gave Me I have given to them;
 8. And we see down in v 14 that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.
- b. Jesus didn't have a beginning.
- i. In the beginning, He was already there.
 - ii. **Genesis 1:1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
 - iii. There was a point in time when His humanity began – His conception and then 9 months later His birth, but that wasn't His beginning.
- c. Beginning of what?
- i. Before all things came into being, "all things" is emphasized as being all encompassing for everything that has come into existence – the Word did not come into existence
 - ii. Everything that had a beginning has a creator – the Word doesn't have a beginning
- d. The Word was with God.
- i. *pros* – with, towards – like "face to face"
 - ii. combined with "was God" it communicates distinction yet unity.
 - iii. (Carson) –
 1. Mark 6:3 – his sisters here with us
 2. mark 14:49 – every day I was with you
 3. Philemon 1:13 – I would have liked to keep him with me –
 - iv. Carson - The Word He is talking about is a person, *with God* and therefore distinguishable from God, and enjoying a personal relationship with Him.
- e. I have both of these first two points listed as coming from vv 1 and 2 because they repeat for emphasis.
2. Jesus is **God**. (1:1-2)
- a. You may have had some friendly Jehovah's Witnesses knock on your door and if you talk with them, they would take you to this passage and say we mistranslate it.

- i. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.”— John 1:1, New World Translation.
 - ii. Does that make much of a difference? They add the letter “a” and put “god” with a lowercase “g”. The difference is huge. They introduce more than one god and they lower Jesus to less than the eternal God.
 - iii. The JW argument is technical so the response is a little technical.
 1. I just read someone that said when someone comes over to your house for dessert, you don’t tell them all the ingredients in the dessert and all the steps for how you made them, you just give them the cake and they enjoy it. And then if they ask for the recipe, you can give it to them. The point is that preaching should be like that. People don’t need all the technical details of why you arrive at a certain conclusion, they need the end result. However, I’m going to break that rule here because I want to equip you to not be persuaded by the arguments you might here.
 2. Their argument is that the Greek text does not have an article (“the”) before “God” so it is not referring to Almighty God but to Jesus as another god – a created being of Almighty God, Jehovah.
 - a. Like the difference between saying “grab me a book” verses “grab me the book” – general vs specific.
 3. We can answer that linguistically and theologically.
 4. Linguistically, it is true that there is not a definite article before God. But it is not true that we can conclude it is talking about “a god” instead of “God.”
 - a. The Greek linguist Colwell studied the use of the article or lack of the article and concluded that in this construction the lack of the article is expected and context has to determine how we translate it. It became known as Colwell’s Rule.
 - b. Even within 1:1-18 the word for God is used 8 times and only has the article twice and yet 6 of those 8 times the NWT translates it as “God.”
 - iv. Carson – “Indeed, the effect of ordering the words this way is to emphasize ‘God’, as if John were saying, ‘and the word was *God!*’”
 - v. Kostenberger - “The force of the anarthrous is probably not so much that of definiteness as that of quality: Jesus ‘shared the essence of the Father, though they differed in person.’ ”
 - b. Theologically, we know there is only one God and all the fullness of deity is in Jesus.
 - i. **Colossians 2:9** For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,
 - c. The wording is actually incredibly precise and concise in teaching the Triunity of God.
 - i. Wallace - He shared the essence of the Father though they differed in person. The construction the evangelist chose to express this idea was the most concise way he could have stated that the Word was God and yet was distinct from the Father.
 - ii. Jesus is God but He is also with God – how can this be? Because God eternally exists as Father and Son (and Spirit – but not the emphasis here).
3. Jesus is the **Creator**. (1:3)
- a. Overlapping wording to emphasize His complete involvement with all aspects of Creation.

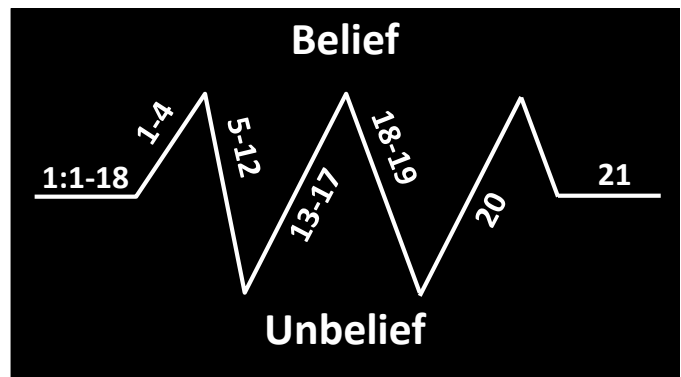
- b. There are only two categories of “things” – Created and Uncreated
 - i. Things that had a beginning and things that didn’t have a beginning
 - ii. Jesus is in the uncreated/no beginning category
- c. Stated positively and negatively
 - i. Positively – all things came into being through Him
 - ii. Negatively – apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being
- d. RC Sproul - The Bible says, "In the beginning God." The God we worship is the God who has always been. He alone can create beings, because He alone has the power of being ... He is pure Being, the One who has the power to be all by Himself. He alone is eternal. He alone has power over death. He alone can call worlds into being by fiat, by the power of His command. Such power is staggering, awesome. It is deserving of respect, of humble adoration.
- e. Hughes - We can trust such a God with everything. Because he is Creator, he knows just what his creation, his people, need.
 - i. It was said of Charles Steinmetz, the mechanical genius and friend of Henry Ford, that he could build a motor in his mind, and if it broke down he could fix it in his mind. So when he designed it and actually built it, it ran with precision.
 - ii. One day the assembly line in the Ford plant broke down. None of Ford’s men could fix it, so they called in Steinmetz. He tinkered for a few minutes, threw the switch, and it started running again.
 - iii. A few days later Ford received a bill from Steinmetz for \$10,000. Ford wrote back, “Charlie, don’t you think your bill is a little high for just a little tinkering!” Steinmetz sent back a revised bill: “Tinkering—\$10. Knowing where to tinker—\$9,990.”
 - iv. Only Jesus knows where the tinkering should be done in our lives to keep us in perfect running order.
 - v. He is our Creator. Are you resting in him? Have you entrusted your life to him? Considering the greatness of Christ, nothing else makes any sense at all.

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