



# Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: John 1:1-9*

John 1:1-9

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

### 1. The WORD Described

#### a. Who is He? 1:1-2, 4

##### a. In the beginning was the Word

a. “[The] words “In the beginning” unmistakably echo Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth.” Yet the differences are more striking than the similarities. God is the solitary Creator in the Genesis account, while in John creation is jointly the work of God and the Word. Genesis, moreover, is interested in God’s *act*, not God’s *being* or *existence*, which is simply presupposed. ...John’s Gospel, by contrast, focuses on *being*, in three clauses: (1) “in the beginning *was* the Word,” (2) “the Word *was* with God,” and (3) “the Word *was*” J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, pp. 46-47

b. In the beginning was the Word echoes the opening phrase of the book of Genesis, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” John will soon identify this Word as Jesus (v. [14](#)), but here he locates Jesus’ existence in eternity past with God. ESV Study Bible

2. The Word with God, the Word was God

##### b. Attributes of the Word

a. In Him was life 1:4

b. Not created life but what later is called eternal life

- a. "the first [attribute]... is "life," probably not physical life (which according to Genesis 1 was created), but spiritual life, or what the Gospel of Joh elsewhere calls "eternal life." J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 54
- c. Not that he possessed life but was life
- c. The life was the light of men
- b. John addresses the Jews
  - a. The term "the Word" (Gk. *Logos*) conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech and has a rich OT background. God's Word is effective: God speaks, and things come into being ( [1:3, 9](#); [Ps. 33:6](#); [107:20](#); [Isa. 55:10-11](#)), and by speech he relates personally to his people (e.g., [Gen. 15:1](#)). John also shows how this concept of "the Word" is superior to a Greek philosophical concept of "Word" (*logos*) as an impersonal principle of Reason that gave order to the universe. ESV Study Bible
    - a. Jesus the Messiah was intimately involved with creation
    - b. Jesus is the word who reveals God, expresses God
    - c. Jesus is the life and this life is the light – 1:4
      - a. If you don't know him, you are in darkness
  - c. John addresses the Greek philosophers and Stoics
    - a. Logos was a principle, a rationality that gave order to the universe
    - b. The goal of human life was to live in accordance with logos.
      - a. "In Stoic texts *Logos* was [redefined] to refer especially to 'reason' or 'rationality.' Moreover, the Stoics explicitly identified *logos* with a divinity present throughout the universe, the very principle that caused all things...For the Stoics... *Logos* becomes the prime active force, pervading all things. It is in all & through all & guides all...[Hence,] **the goal of human life was to live in accordance with Logos... since those who live in conflict [with Logos] are unhappy.**" [Peter Phillips, *Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*, . 94-95 & #76]
    - c. Describing logos as a person was totally radical.
      - a. "Logos received its loftiest meaning in Stoicism: it is the world reason that orders the event, with which the reason of individual men concurs (if they follow their rational selves). *This logos* which...is matter's principle of order, *has nothing in common with John 1:1*...Although the [ancient Greek] concept of the *logos* is *reminiscent* of John's *Logos in certain respects*, the two remain very deeply divided; *it is impossible* on the [ancient Greek] view *for the logos to become an individual person.*" [Ernst Haenchen, *John: Chapters 1-6*, 137]

## 2. The WORD in Creation – 1:3

- a. All things created through him
  - <sup>3</sup> *All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.*
- b. Everything that was created was through him (repeated in the negative)
  - a. Corresponds to Genesis
    - a. God spoke "Let there be...."
    - b. Creation came into being through the word of God
    - c. That "word" was a person
    - d. He was in the beginning – eternal
  - b. The creative works were done through the Son
    - a. "**Made through him** follows the consistent pattern of Scripture in saying that God the Father carried out his creative works through the activity of the Son (cf. [1 Cor. 8:6](#); [1:16](#); [Heb. 1:2](#)). This verse disproves any suggestion that the Word (or the Son, [John 1:14](#)) was created, for the Father would have had to do this by himself, and John says that nothing was created that way, for **without him was not any thing made that was made.**" ESV Study Bible

## 3. The Dawning of Light – 1:4-9

- a. *In him was life and the life was the light of men* – 1:4
- b. The light shines in the darkness – 1:5
  - a. Jesus came as light and to be light Isa. 9:2,6
    - "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness.... For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."*** Isa. 9:2,6
  - b. The darkness does not overcome it, light is victorious
    - "Right from the start it is clear that a confrontation between light and darkness has taken place once and for all, and that the light has emerged victorious. The light shines on in the darkness, and the writer will now proceed to narrate how this all came about." J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 57
- c. Darkness as evil

- d. Darkness does not comprehend/understand it  
*And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it. John 1:5 (NASB)*
- e. Darkness personified as people who cannot see or understand the light
- c. The light testified by John the Baptist– 1:6-8
  - a. John sent to testify concerning the light
  - b. He was not the light but was an agent of the light
  - c. So that all might believe through him  
“The goal of John’s testimony is “that they all might believe through him” – not “in him” but “through him.” This is the first appearance of the verb “believe” (*pisteuein*) and we are not yet told what, or in whom, people were to believe. A reasonable guess is that they were to believe in “the light.” This would give a certain symmetry to the first twelve chapters of the Gospel, for Jesus’ last words to the crowds at Jerusalem at the end of his public ministry were, “Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness will not overtake you...While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light (12:35-36).” J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, p. 60
  - d. John was only the agent of belief, Jesus the object of belief  
“While John the Baptist was the agent of belief, Jesus Christ is the object of belief. Although John’s person and ministry were vitally important (Mt. 11:11), he was merely the forerunner who announced the coming of the Messiah. The MacArthur Study Bible
- d. Jesus, the true light, gives light to everyone 1:9
  - a. **“Jesus spoke to them again: “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.” John 8:12**
  - b. Not everyone receives the light, or understands it
    - a. *This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. John 3:19*
    - b. **And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it. John 1:5 (NASB)**
- e. Not everyone understands, not everyone wants to acknowledge Jesus as the true light.
  - a. People are looking outside of Christ for answers
    - a. Politics (Brazil, US – polarized; war in Ukraine, China...)
    - b. Economics (inflation, recession, )
    - c. Environment (COP26, climate change, droughts in East Africa, floods , air pollution,...)
    - d. World health
    - e. Social justice
  - b. Apart from Christ as the light there is no hope  
Vaclav Havel (first president of the Czech Republic, 1993-2003)
    - a. **“The pursuit of the good life will not help humanity save itself, nor is democracy alone enough....A turning to and seeking of... God, is needed.”** Vaclav Havel
    - b. “When we lose God in the modern world, we lose meaning, purpose, accountability, and responsibility.”
    - c. ...humanity probably will have to go through many more Rwandas and Chernobyls before it understands how unbelievably short-sighted a human being can be who has forgotten that he is not God. Vaclav Havel, *Forgetting We are not God*, March 1995
    - d. **Havel puts it well – humanity cannot save itself. In fact, he argues, the belief that we can save ourselves – that some political system or ideology can fix human problems – has only led to more darkness. – Tim Keller, *Hidden Christmas***
- f. He is coming into the world – 1:9
  - a. John is writing to the Jews and the Gentiles of his day
  - b. How about us? How will we respond?
    - a. Will we let Jesus Christ be the light in our life?
    - b. We can choose to let him be the light or we can remain in darkness?
  - c. Will we receive him?
  - d. Will we align ourselves to him as believers and receivers?