

**connect 360**

**STUDY GUIDE**

# *Grace and Truth*

A STUDY OF THE  
Gospel of John

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 **BaptistWayPress**  
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*Grace and Truth (A Study of the Gospel of John)—Connect 360 Bible Study Guide*

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# How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

Do all the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. Here are some suggestions to guide your lesson preparation:

- A. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on pages 9–10 and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
  - If all your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
  - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) under the “Teacher Helps” menu.
  - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
- B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
- C. After you’ve studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- D. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
- E. Additional Bible study comments on the lessons are available online. Call 1–866–249–1799 or e-mail [baptistway@texasbaptists.org](mailto:baptistway@texasbaptists.org) to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website, [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org). The price of these comments for the entire study is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Commentary* free. Call 1–866–249–1799 or see [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) to purchase or for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

- F. Additional teaching plans are also available in electronic format (PDF) by calling 1-866-249-1799. The price of these additional teaching plans for the entire study is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Teaching Plans* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.
- G. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

### Do you use a Kindle?

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# Grace and Truth

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# Introducing

## Grace and Truth

### A STUDY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Which do you prefer, grace or truth? Perhaps your answer depends on whether you are the dispenser or the recipient. We usually don't mind dispensing truth, especially difficult truth, but we may not be as eager to receive it. On the other hand, most everyone enjoys receiving grace (unmerited favor from others), though we might find it hard to extend such consideration to our neighbors, coworkers, friends, or family.

The Apostle John tells us in his Gospel that Jesus was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus was the perfect embodiment of these two attributes. He always spoke the truth (about himself, his mission, and our needs), and he was always the embodiment of grace as he served others and eventually sacrificed his life to redeem us. The Gospel of John is full of stories which illustrate Jesus' grace and truth—from his conversation with a Samaritan woman at a well (John 4), to his modeling of servanthood in John 13.

Jesus' familiar words in John 3 point to both grace and truth: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16); and these words from John 3:18: “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in God's one and only Son.”

How will you respond to Jesus' grace and truth?

Each winter our Connect 360 Bible Study series focuses on a Gospel. For a complete list of our studies see [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org).

## Background on the Gospel of John

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Scholars believe the Gospel of John was written by the apostle John (James' brother) from Ephesus, somewhere between 85–90 A.D. One of the striking features of the Gospel of John is its difference from the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The Gospel of John contains no information on the genealogy of Jesus, no details of his birth or early years in Nazareth, and no mention of his temptation in the wilderness. It has been stated that,

John's Gospel is not a life of Christ; it is a powerful argument for the incarnation, a conclusive demonstration that Jesus was, and is, the very heaven-sent Son of God and the only source of eternal life.<sup>1</sup>

This can be seen in the first chapter of John. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1), and "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

John focused on both Jesus' deity and his humanity. He states his purpose in writing his Gospel in John 20:30–31:

Jesus did many other miraculous 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 Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

In light of John's emphasis on belief, there are many encounters described in the Book of John that are not found in the other Gospels. These include:

- John the Baptist declaring Jesus to be the Messiah
- Jesus turning water into wine
- Nicodemus visiting Jesus at night
- Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman at the well
- Jesus healing a government official's son
- Jesus healing a disabled man by the pool
- Jesus healing the man who was born blind

- Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead
- Jesus teaching about the Holy Spirit
- Jesus teaching about the vine and the branches
- Jesus appearing to Thomas
- Jesus reinstating Peter after his resurrection<sup>2</sup>

One can see the grace and truth of Jesus revealed in each of these encounters.

There are also several major themes found in the Book of John, including:

1. **Jesus Christ, Son of God**—John uses nine miracles (he calls them “signs”) for the purpose of revealing Jesus as God’s one and only Son. Because Jesus is fully God (as well as fully man), he provides a clear revelation of God to us.
2. **Eternal Life**—Jesus came to bring us “life to the full”—eternal life, and this life is available to us now through faith in Christ. This life secures us a home in heaven but is also a quality of life that brings meaning and purpose to those who surrender to Jesus in faith.
3. **Believing**—John emphasizes the importance of believing that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, but this belief is more than mere mental assent. Saving faith includes believing the facts about Jesus, turning from sin, and obeying his teachings. It includes Jesus being both our Savior and our Lord.
4. **Holy Spirit**—John emphasizes the Holy Spirit’s role as “Counselor.” The Holy Spirit would come and abide with the disciples, he would teach them, reveal truth to them, remind them of Jesus’ words, and convict people of their need for Jesus. His actions would parallel those of Jesus as he would come to guide, counsel, and comfort.
5. **Resurrection**—The greatest “sign” John presents is Jesus’ resurrection. He describes several witnesses to Jesus’ death on the cross, but that was not the end of the story. Jesus defeated death by rising from the grave and John recounts Jesus speaking with Mary Magdalene and his disciples following his resurrection. He even tells of Jesus reinstating Peter to his role of service after Peter’s denials of Christ.

One of the greatest evidences of Jesus' resurrection is how the disciples changed from fearful followers to those who would become courageous witnesses and take the gospel to every part of the world.<sup>3</sup>

## The Gospel of John in Our Day

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How can we apply the themes from the Gospel of John (mentioned above) to our lives today? Here are a few suggestions:

1. **Jesus Christ, Son of God.** We must affirm both the deity and humanity of Jesus. The incarnation is a magnificent blessing in that our Savior chose to become like us, understanding our struggles, yet chose to live a sinless life.
2. **Eternal Life.** Life is short, but it can be full of meaning, purpose, and hope if one has a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a quality of life that is available to us now.
3. **Believing.** This is active and continual trust—not merely a mental exercise. Our actions and obedience to Jesus will reveal what we truly believe about him.
4. **Holy Spirit.** Christ-followers can be confident of the presence of the Holy Spirit and can lean on him as counselor, comforter, and revealer of truth.
5. **Resurrection.** Jesus' resurrection proved that he is the Son of God and that everything he taught is true—including the promise of eternal life. We worship and serve a living Savior!<sup>4</sup>

People today need grace and truth. They need to know their failures are not final, but they also need to know the truth about Jesus and his great love for them. May this study of the Gospel of John propel us to be messengers of grace and truth in the world.

*Note:* Since the time of the first release of these materials includes the Christmas holiday, a Christmas lesson is included to meet the needs of churches who wish to have an emphasis on Christmas at this time.

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**GRACE AND TRUTH: A STUDY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**


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Lesson 2	Glory and Judgment	John 2:1–22
Lesson 3	The Source of Eternal Life	John 3:1–21
Lesson 4	Crossing Barriers with Grace and Truth	John 4:4–30, 39–42
Lesson 5	Do You Want to Get Well?	John 5:1–24
Lesson 6	A Hard Teaching	John 6:52–69
Lesson 7	Physical and Spiritual Blindness	John 9:1–7, 13–41
Lesson 8	Committed to the Task	John 12:20–37, 42–50
Lesson 9	Follow Jesus' Example	John 13:1–17
Lesson 10	The Coming Counselor	John 14:15–31
Lesson 11	It is Finished	John 19:1–30
Lesson 12	I Have Seen the Lord!	John 20:1–21
Lesson 13	A Remarkable Catch and a Gracious Restoration	John 21
Christmas Lesson	Glory to God in the Highest!	Luke 2:1–20

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**Additional Resources for Studying *Grace and Truth* (A Study of the Gospel of John)<sup>5</sup>**


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## Notes

1. Bruce Barton, Philip Comfort, Grant Osborne, Linda K. Taylor, and Dave Veerman, *Life Application New Testament Commentary* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001), 365.
2. *Ibid.*, 368–369.
3. *Ibid.*, 369–371.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BAPTISTWAY PRESS® with all of its comments.



# lesson **1**

## The Word Became Flesh

### MAIN IDEA

Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth in human form.

### QUESTION TO EXPLORE

Why is it significant that Jesus was fully God and fully man?

### STUDY AIM

To understand the eternal nature of Jesus and the miracle of his incarnation

### QUICK READ

Jesus, who was fully God, became fully human so he could make God known to us and enable those who receive him to become children of God.



## Introduction

A flash of golden fur caught my eye as I drove past the roadside park. A dog was lying under one of the picnic tables. He perked up his ears and wagged his tail as I pulled into the parking spot. But as soon as I stepped out of the car, he dashed under the fence into the nearby pasture. I laid some scraps of food on the ground and waited, but the dog wouldn't approach. I went back to the park several times over the next few days, but the dog would never come close to me. I wished I could speak "dog," so I could explain there was a better life waiting for him if he would trust me.

I couldn't speak "dog," but in a sense, Jesus is God's way of speaking "human." Jesus, fully God, became fully human so he could show us what God is like. Jesus revealed the Father's heart and showed us how we can become children of God.<sup>1</sup>

### John 1:1–18

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and 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 to the light, so that all might believe through him.

<sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

<sup>15</sup> (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He

who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.”)  
**16** From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. **17** The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.

## In the Beginning (1:1–5)

If you want to tell the story of a person’s life, you usually start at the beginning. You might begin with his or her birth or share other details about the individual’s early life. Matthew and Luke both launch their stories of Jesus’ life with his birth, but John wanted to show that Jesus’ story didn’t begin the night he was born in Bethlehem. John started telling his story at the moment of Creation—when Jesus was clearly present.

The single sentence that begins John’s Gospel is rich with meaning. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). *Logos* is the Greek word most English Bibles translate as *Word*. Greeks understood *Logos* as the principle of reason that held the world together. Jews didn’t use *Logos* in the same way, but they personified wisdom as an aspect of God’s character and thought of the Torah—God’s written word—as an embodied agent of God.

John drew on this background, but he also went beyond it. The first sentence of John’s Gospel makes plain that Jesus is not just an aspect or an agent of God; Jesus is God. John pushed the limits of language to explain something our finite minds struggle to grasp: the concept of the Trinity. This is how John could say, “the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit, but God is Father, Son, and Spirit. This first sentence sums up the theme of John’s Gospel: Jesus reveals God to us.

The Word (Jesus) existed in the beginning. At the dawn of Creation, Jesus was God, and Jesus was with God. As God spoke the cosmos into existence, Jesus was the One through whom all things were created. “Without

him not one thing came into being” (1:3). Jesus was not created; Jesus is the Creator.

Jesus is also the embodiment of life itself. Jesus is life because he is the truth and the way to God. As Creation began with light (Genesis 1:4), God’s creation of the new covenant began with light. Jesus is light itself—all that is good, holy, pure, and right. When our world lay darkened beneath the shadow of sin and death, Jesus’ light pierced the darkness. Jesus, God’s incarnate Word, stepped into our darkness to show us God’s light.

## John, the Witness to the Light (1:6–9)

Next, John talked about another figure, “a man sent from God” to witness to the light (1:6). John the Baptist—a different John than the author of the Gospel of John—was Jesus’ older cousin (Luke 1:36, 57–60). God sent him

### Understanding the Logos

John used the Greek word *logos* to identify Jesus as God’s incarnate Word. It was a concept that would have resonated with both John’s Greek and Jewish readers. In Greek literature, the *Logos*—the Word—was the universal principle of rationality or reason. Greeks thought of the *Logos* as identical to God and believed the *Logos* functioned as a guide for the soul.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Jews also often thought of wisdom as a person and understood God’s wisdom as an active force in Creation. However, the Greek word for wisdom is *sophia*, not *logos*. For Jewish readers, when they heard *logos*, they may have thought of the Torah, God’s written word. The Torah—the first five books of our Bible—was at the center of the Jewish faith. Jewish teachers believed God himself kept the Torah and said that the Torah sustained the world. Jewish literature often described the Torah as a person. John drew on all this background to portray Jesus as the embodiment of the Torah—God’s fullest revelation of himself.<sup>3</sup>

to prepare the people to respond to Jesus. It is possible that as John wrote his Gospel, there was a group of people who made the mistake of exalting John the Baptist as God's final revelation, the last and most significant of the prophets. John may have tried to correct that here. John the Baptist was a lamp, not the light (John 5:35). His role was to tell people about Jesus and urge them to repent so they could respond in faith. John the Baptist is an example of the kind of witnesses we are called to be. We are not the light, but we help people understand and respond to the light of Christ. Jesus is the light. We are the lamps in which he shines.

### **The World Did Not Know Him (1:10–13)**

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Jesus created the world, yet the world he created failed to recognize him. In verse 10, "world" probably refers to Gentiles, non-Jews. Jesus came to show the world God's love, but the people God loved failed to recognize him walking among them. Even Jesus' own people, the nation of Israel, refused to accept him. Israeli Jews cherished their identity as God's chosen people and believed they were the only nation worthy to receive the Torah. Although they embraced the Torah as God's word, they rejected God's incarnate Word.

However, there was still hope. While many continued in their stubborn sin and spiritual blindness, some received Jesus as God made flesh. To those "who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God" (1:12). In Scripture, a person's name means the person's real character or the person himself. Receiving Jesus and believing in his name means to trust him for our salvation, to give our allegiance to him, and to accept Jesus as who he claimed to be: God himself.<sup>4</sup>

Those who believe in Jesus and follow him as Lord become children of God. Jesus did not come to make us slaves or subjects. He came to make us beloved and cherished children. Being a child of God is not about being born into the right family or attending church every week. Real children of God are those who embrace Jesus and enter into a covenant relationship with him. When we confess our sins and commit to follow Jesus as Lord, we become children of God.

## Jesus “Tabernacled” Among Us (1:14–18)

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John said, “The Word became flesh and lived among us” (1:14). Jesus was fully God, but he was also fully human. Though he was the Creator of all things, he wrapped himself in humanity along with all our weakness and frailty. He did this to show us what God was like, but he also did it because enabling us to become children of God came with a price. Our sin separated us from God. Because of our rebellion against him, humanity owed a debt to God. No human being could bear the full weight of God’s wrath against sin. Only Jesus—fully God and fully human—could embody that sacrifice. Though he was sinless, Jesus took humanity’s sin upon himself on the cross. He paid the price for our redemption.

Jesus was God made flesh, living and walking among us. The word John used to describe how God lived among us means “he pitched his tent,” or “he tabernacled among us.” In the Old Testament, the tabernacle was the tent of meeting in which God’s glory dwelled during Israel’s journey from Egypt to the promised land. The tabernacle rested in the center of the camp with the tents of the nation of Israel surrounding it. Jesus became the new tabernacle, the center of God’s activity among his people and a fuller revelation of God’s glory.<sup>5</sup>

John referred to Jesus as an “only son” (1:14). Calling someone an only son could mean an individual is an only child, but it also could mean he is particularly beloved.<sup>6</sup> As God’s only son, Jesus is the particular and unique object of God’s love. Followers of Christ now share that relationship as God’s beloved children.

As Jesus showed us the Father, he revealed that God is full of grace and truth. God’s decision to lavish love on the people who had rebelled against him demonstrates his grace. However, Jesus also shows us truth—both the plumb line for morality and the embodiment of integrity. Both grace and truth are summed up in the person of Jesus Christ.

In verse 15, John returned to the witness of John the Baptist. In the minds of the first-century world, the greater always preceded the lesser. Since John the Baptist’s ministry came before Jesus, some might view John the Baptist as the greater of the two. However, John himself acknowledged Jesus was greater because Jesus came before him (1:30). John was a man. Jesus was the eternal God who existed before Creation.



## Becoming a Child of God

Jesus came so that all who receive him and believe in his name might become children of God. To receive Jesus, you must:

- Admit that you have sinned and disobeyed God.
- Ask God for forgiveness and embrace Jesus as Savior.
- Believe that Jesus is God.
- Commit to following Jesus as Lord.

Jesus was the fullness of God's revelation, the perfect summation of God's character and glory. Through Jesus, we receive "grace upon grace." Like a fountain continually refreshing its water supply, Jesus never runs out of grace. As we receive favor, God continues to supply us with more grace from his inexhaustible reservoir of mercy.

The Jews thought of the law as the pinnacle of God's revelation of himself, but Jesus' revelation of God is greater than the revelation God gave to Moses (1:17). The law was a partial revelation of God's heart and character. Jesus is the fullness. What the law hinted at and revealed about God is now fully available to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' revelation of God is greater than the revelation God gave Moses. Moses had an intimate and personal relationship with God, but God only allowed Moses to catch a glimpse of his back as the Lord passed by (Exodus 33:20–23). Even Moses did not see God, but Jesus has made God fully known (John 1:17–18). Jesus fully interprets God to us. Being "close to the Father's heart" is the image of a child sitting on his father's lap. His intimate relationship with the Father enables Jesus to reveal God's heart to us.

## Implications and Actions

If we want to know what God is like, we must look at Jesus. God's justice, compassion, love, complete mercy, and an unending supply of grace are all visible in Jesus. Once we have seen what God is like, we must decide how we will respond to who God is.

Jesus made it possible for us to be children of God. To take up our destiny as God’s beloved children, we must accept Jesus for who he is. Jesus is no mere martyr, philosopher, or moral teacher. He is Lord. Becoming children of God means accepting Jesus as who he claimed to be: God made flesh. It means receiving him as the definition of grace and truth, aligning ourselves with him rather than trying to force him into our molds. It means recognizing that Jesus is the source of all that is good, pure, and right—and the only way we can hope to get rid of the darkness in our lives is to let his light live in us. Jesus has shown you who God is. How will you respond to him?

## Questions

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1. How does it impact your faith to know Jesus was fully human on earth and yet fully God?
2. What does Jesus’ identity tell us about God’s heart for us?



6. Jesus reveals God to us. How can we learn more about God from looking at Jesus? What has studying Jesus' life and example helped you understand about God?

## Notes

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1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–4 are from the New Revised Standard Version (1989).
2. Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Vol 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 342.
3. *Ibid.*, 357–360.
4. F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 37.
5. Keener, 410.
6. *Ibid.*, 416.