

# connect 360

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE

# *Grace and Truth*

A STUDY OF THE  
Gospel of John

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# How to Make the Best Use of This *Teaching Guide*

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This *Teaching Guide* has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you will find first “Bible Comments” for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of “Bible Comments” are “Understanding the Context,” “Interpreting the Scriptures,” and “Focusing on the Meaning.” “Understanding the Context” provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. “Interpreting the Scriptures” provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. “Focusing on the Meaning” offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is “Teaching Plans.” You’ll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called the “Discovery Plan,” which emphasizes discovery learning techniques; and the second is called the “Discussion Plan,” which provides questions and suggestions for dialogue about the Scriptures. Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach.

The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach so as to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, “Connect with Life,” provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, “Guide Bible Study,” offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible’s message. The third major heading, “Encourage Application,” is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

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. You might use one or more of the following methods:

- 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 in their *Study Guides* 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 of 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” tab.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

Here are some steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers meet for lesson overview and preparation, plan to participate. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers don’t have this planning time now, look for ways to begin. You, your fellow teachers, and your church will benefit from this mutual encouragement and preparation.
3. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents, and see where this lesson fits in the overall study. Then read or review the study introduction to the book that is being studied.
4. Consider carefully the suggested Main Idea, Question to Explore, and Teaching Aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.

5. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. Using your Bible in your study and in the class session can provide a positive model to class members to use their own Bibles and give more attention to Bible study themselves. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)
6. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in the *Study Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
7. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class, and think about how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

**Premium Commentary. Plan to get the additional Bible study comments available online.** Visit our website, 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. The price of these comments 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) for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

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***FREE!*** Downloadable teaching resource items for use in your class are available at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org). Watch for them in the “Teaching Plans” for each lesson. Then go online to [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) and click on “Teaching Resource Items” under the “Teacher Helps” tab for this study. These items are selected from the “Teaching Plans.” They are provided online to make lesson preparation easier for handouts and similar items. Permission is granted to download these teaching resource items, print them out, copy them as needed, and use them in your class.

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# Grace and Truth

## A Study of the Gospel of John

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# 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?

### TEACHING AIM

To lead adults to understand the eternal nature of Jesus and the miracle of his incarnation



## Bible Comments

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### Understanding the Context

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The Gospel of John begins with the revealing and empowering presence of God coming into the midst of humanity. Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth in human form. The eternal Word of God became flesh and lived among humankind. Immanuel arrived. John 1:1–18 forms a prologue to this Gospel.

Scholars recognize the hymnic nature of the prologue, but they form no consensus concerning the origin of the prologue. In it, John introduced his main term, *logos*, without definition or an origin of the meaning of the term. Although the Greek term *logos* can mean “word,” the meaning behind the term *logos* may be found in Greek culture and Jewish literature.<sup>1</sup>

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### Interpreting the Scriptures

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#### The Relation of the *logos*/Word to All (1:1–5)

**1:1a.** John’s Gospel begins in eternity: “In (the) beginning.” Read alone, the two Greek words (“in beginning”) harken back to Genesis 1. However, the author did not intend the two words to stand alone. He connected them with the phrase “was the Word.” The author did not use the definite article “the.” This construction stresses the quality of the “beginning” instead of the specifics of “beginning.”

**1:1b.** The divine “Word” (*logos* in Greek) existed from the beginning, just as God (*theos* in Greek) always existed. As the passage progressed, John equated the *logos*, “Word,” with Jesus. He defined the *logos* as eternal, just as God is eternal. The *logos* did not exist separately from God but was with God. Greek philosophers equated the *logos* with the universal reason that governed and permeated the world. In the Old Testament, God’s Word (*logos* equivalent) had creative power.

**1:1c.** The divine Word was God! Greek places emphasis on “God” in the expression, “the Word was God.” God was the *logos*. John boldly asserted that God and the *logos* are the same. The lack of the definite article with the word “God” underscores the nature and character of God. There are no percentages of division. As God is divine, so is the *logos*. How can any language adequately express this concept?

**1:2.** This verse reaffirms that the *logos* existed from the beginning with God. Notice the fourfold use of the verb “was” in verses 1 and 2: “*was* the Word,” “the Word *was* with God,” “God *was* the Word,” and “this (one, i.e., the *logos*) *was* in the beginning with God.” The use of “was” focuses on the living *logos* without any reference to an origin. The term *preexistence* expresses these statements. There never was a time when the *logos* did not exist.

**1:3.** Verse 3 strongly identifies the Word (*logos*) as the instrument of Creation and that nothing was created without the Word’s activity. As in Genesis 1, in which all things came into existence by divine command, John claimed that all things came into existence through the *logos*. Genesis 1 declares that God’s Word called into existence the cosmos. The preposition “without” may also be expressed as *apart from*. Apart from the *logos*, not a single thing came into existence.

Out of disorder came order. Out of the darkness came light. Out of non-being came being. John claimed that the *logos* calls forth spiritual law, spiritual light, and spiritual life.

**1:4.** The Word is the source of all “life,” which is the “light” of all people. John stressed that what came into existence through the *logos* was “life.” This “life” was special because “life” was that which was the “light” of all people. Humanity cannot escape the divine light of God.

**1:5.** The “light” is more powerful than the “darkness.” The “light” “shines” (present tense) in the “darkness,” not “shown” (past tense) in the “darkness.” The light shines continuously (present tense) in the “darkness.”

Darkness is not merely the absence of illumination. It is not just a negative concept. It is not just a lack of knowledge of God. Here John used the idea of “darkness” as that which is in opposition to the deity. Despite the

“darkness” in the world, the “light” of God shines continuously and the “darkness,” with all of its influence, cannot shut down, or shut off the “light.”

The Greek word *kataelaben* means either *understood* or *overcome*. Therefore, verse 5 translates as either “darkness” did not understand the “light” or the “darkness” did not overcome the “light.” The “darkness” could not overtake the “light.” The “darkness” could not grasp the “light.” God’s triumph in Creation prevails over all “darkness.”

The prologue of John’s Gospel introduces many of the concepts developed in the body of the Gospel: life, light, and darkness. The incarnation of the *logos* (vs. 14) affords all the opportunity of eternal life.

## The Witness of John the Baptist (1:6–8)

**1:6–8.** John the Baptist was not the “light” but rather a personal witness of the “light.” These verses lead the reader to transition from *logos* of eternity to the *logos* of history. The Gospel writer described John the Baptist as a mere mortal man “sent” from God. He had a purpose. His mission was of divine origin with divine orders. He came as a “witness” to be a “witness” concerning the “light” (see verses 4, 5).

John the Baptist descended from a priestly family (Luke 1:5). However, his ministry was not that of a priest, but of a prophet “sent” from God. John the Baptist’s “witness” concerning the “light” had a specific purpose. The expression “so that” reveals the purpose of John the Baptist’s witness of the light: that “all might believe.” Notice the subjunctive idea “might.” John’s witness does not guarantee that all will believe, but that all will have the opportunity to believe. The Gospel writer made clear that John the Baptist was not the anticipated Messiah (“light”) but, in the tradition of the prophets, was to bring “witness” concerning the “light.”

## The Coming and Rejection of the *logos* (1:9–11)

**1:9.** This verse proclaims the *logos* as the pure light who enlightens every person. This light was entering the world as a reality in the days of John the Baptist and John the Apostle.

**1:10.** In Hebrew fashion, the *logos* was coming (anticipation) into the world (vs. 9) and was already (an accomplished act) in the world (vs. 10). Repeating the concept of verse 3, John the Apostle informed readers the *logos* was responsible for the world's existence. One would think that the world would recognize its Creator. However, in a strange twist, the Gospel writer told his readers that the "world" did not "know him" [the Creator].

**1:11.** This verse intentionally shifts verb tenses and pronoun genders in a marvelous literary dance. Notice the flow of the verse. "He came into (his) own things (neuter plural)"—a reference to Creation. "And (his) own people (masculine plural) did not receive him." Therefore, the author declared that the *logos* came (past tense, a point in time in the past) to his own (Creation), but his "own people" did not accept him. This verse speaks to a sad reality.

### The Benefit of Belief in the *logos* (1:12–13)

**1:12.** Verse 11 speaks of those who rejected the *logos*. However, not everyone refused or rejects the divine *logos*. Verse 12 refers to the ones who did (and do) receive Jesus: "but to all who received him." The word "received" refers to an act at a point in time and not to an "off again, on again" reception or to a potential reception.

He "gave" to those who, at a point in time, "received" him "power to become children of God." "Power" implies command, capability, and the capacity to accomplish something and is often used to express the power of God (see Luke 12:5 and Acts 1:7). The expression "children of God" is not just a reference to a spiritual condition. It means becoming part of God's eternal family. Romans 8:15–17 refers to the child of God as a joint-heir with Jesus and having the right to use the most intimate term of endearment with God: Abba (in Aramaic) or Daddy (in English).

The intimate relationship with the Creator God belongs only to those who believe in his (the *logos*'s) name. The benefit of belief in the name of the *logos* is the transformation into children of God.

**1.13.** This verse explains that rebirth is a divine transformation. It is solely a divine gift and not a result of any human endeavor. The deity provides each

person who receives the *logos* the power or capability to become children of God. There is no coercion by God. Each individual must choose to believe.

## The Coming and Reception of the *logos* (1:14)

**1:14.** Verse 14 is one of the most definitive statements of the Incarnation in Scripture. Although the verse appears out of order (see verses 9–11 and 12–13), it forms the pinnacle of the section.

Finally, John the Apostle clarified for the reader the identity of the *logos*. The *logos* “became flesh” at a point in time, a singular event in human history. The *logos* was not “flesh” before this point in time.

The expression “lived among us” means *took up residence*, as when Yahweh “tabernacled” among Israel; the phrase does not refer to a permanent home. The *logos* pitched his tent among us. The tabernacle was a temporary residence of Yahweh. So, too, the Incarnation was for a specified period.

The Incarnation occurred once and was for a specified period. The expression “and we beheld his glory” also uses the Greek aorist tense, referring to a point-in-time: we beheld his glory or were witnesses of “his glory” in his earthly ministry. Just as the glory of Yahweh was present in the wilderness tabernacle, so the glory of God is present (“we have seen”) in the eternal, divine *logos* who became flesh and pitched his tent among us.

The expression “as of a father’s only son” or “only begotten” has given rise to many misinterpretations of the text. The expression “his glory” is described as that of a father’s only son. The word translated “as” is the Greek word used for comparison. The author was not stating that Jesus is a physical offspring from a sexual union but that Jesus’ glory is unique in the same way that the offspring of an earthly parent is unique to that parent. It is a term that refers to a one-of-a-kind relationship; a unique comparison. The relationship of the father-son, God-*logos*,

God-Jesus is unique in all of its comparisons. Not only is the “glory” unique, but the “glory” is “full of grace and truth.” These words carry immense significance. One may translate the Greek word for “full” as *fills up* or *full measure*. The “glory” of the *logos* is the sum of divine “grace and truth.”



The word “grace” may refer to the full divine favor bestowed upon the one who believes.

The word “truth” refers to the quality of being in accord with what is true, dependable, and upright. Therefore, the “glory” of the Incarnate, divine *logos* beheld by those who believe, consists of every divine favor and God’s divine dependability.

## The Witness of John the Baptist (1:15)

**1:15.** This verse is a parenthetical commentary on the previous verse. The author declared that John the Baptist’s testimony of the divine *logos* is a continuous testimony (present tense), even though Herod Antipas executed the evangelist before the Apostle John penned his Gospel.

Furthermore, the author claimed that John the Baptist “cried out” or *made a determined outcry* about Jesus, that although John’s proclamation came at a point in time in the past, his message continues to resonate.

What was John the Baptist’s message? The Gospel writer focused on one aspect of John’s multifaceted message—that Jesus was “before me.” In time and space, John the Baptist was born before Jesus. However, he knew Jesus existed before him. The Gospel writer used this as further evidence of the eternal, preexistent Jesus.

## Grace and Truth through Jesus Christ (1:16–18)

**1:16.** John the Apostle proclaimed that from the fullness of Jesus we received grace upon grace. “Fullness” refers to the completeness of Jesus; nothing is lacking or missing. John emphasized “we,” as in “we all have received.” No one needs to worry that he or she has missed out on this opportunity to experience grace upon grace. The double use of “grace” seems to imply no “grace” is withheld.

**1:17.** Verse 17 provides a comparison between Moses and Jesus, law and grace. The “law” (Torah) was given to Israel by Moses, and the law served to reflect the failures of the people of Israel. Although the “law” provided ways for the people to address their failures before God, there never was a

complete removal of their shortcomings. The author proclaimed that “grace and truth,” the total removal of our shortcomings, has taken place through Jesus Christ (in Hebrew, “Messiah”). It is interesting that the author used the name “Jesus” and title of “Christ” in verse 17 for the first time in this Gospel, identifying Jesus as the eternal, divine *logos*.

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### Focusing on the Meaning

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Jesus is not just another religious figure from the ancient past whose teachings resonate in the ears of modern persons. There are famous religious teachers whose teachings or philosophies continue to be followed by their adherents in our day. Many of these teachers espoused some excellent ideas. However, none can claim with authority as the eternal being and agent of Creation, although some claimed divinity.

Since Jesus is indeed the incarnation of the one true deity who lived among his Creation, then his followers cannot remain silent. Many professed followers give intellectual assent concerning the divinity and incarnation of Jesus, yet there is a disconnect between the intellectual assent and transformative behavior. How are you a “witness of the light”?

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect with Life

1. As class members arrive, ask them to consider a question you have written on a poster or markerboard: *Which would you prefer as a gift: grace or truth?* After all members have arrived, allow a short time for responses (one to two minutes).
2. Inform the class that this lesson begins a new unit of study in the Gospel of John. Read John 20:31 aloud and transition to the lesson by leading the class in prayer.

### Guide Bible Study

3. Introduce the study by referring to the question posed in Step 1. Say, *John writes so that his readers will embrace Jesus as the embodiment of grace and truth.* Recruit someone to read aloud John 1:1–3, then ask the following questions:
  - What is unique about John’s opening when compared to the other Gospels?
  - Why is this opening important theologically? (Responses might include: it mentions Jesus’ eternal existence, the presence of the Trinity, Jesus was present at Creation, and so forth.)
  - Does John’s opening remind you of any other passage of Scripture? (Responses might include: Genesis 1:1–5; Colossians 1:15–18)
4. State the “Main Idea” of the lesson, then direct learners to the “Question to Explore” for this lesson and ask them to respond to it.
5. Direct learners to the *Study Guide* sidebar “Understanding the Logos.” Enlist someone to read it aloud. Ask the class to respond to the following questions:
  - *Why did God choose to reveal himself in this way?*
  - *What is unique about the Word, when compared with other elements of God’s revelation?*

6. Read John 1:4–5 aloud and define the word “life” for the class. Ask, *How would your response to the “Question to Explore” change in light of these verses?*
7. If class size allows, form discussion groups of four to five people. Give each group a list of the following questions, and then read John 1:6–13 aloud. Allow groups five to six minutes to discuss the “light” and the “witness.” (A copy of these questions is available in “Teaching Resource Items” for this study at [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org)).
  - What was the primary task of the witness? How did he accomplish it?
  - What principle(s) can we learn from the witness?
  - What was the primary mission of the light? How was it achieved?
  - How did the light come into the world?
  - How did the world respond to the light in John’s day? Why did they reject him?
  - What relationship did the light wish to establish with those who would believe in him?
8. Encourage groups to share their responses. Ask the class:
  - *How do these findings answer the “Question to Explore?”*
  - *How would you explain these truths to someone who was looking for a reason to follow Jesus?*
9. Recruit someone to read John 1:14–18 aloud. Using the “Bible Comments” in this *Teaching Guide*, give a brief explanation of the wording “only Son” and “full of grace and truth.” Ask the following questions:
  - *What was the importance of the Law given by Moses? (It expressed God’s righteous requirements.)*
  - *Why was it necessary for Jesus to come to earth? (Only Jesus could accomplish the deliverance that was needed.)*
  - *What does it mean that God became flesh through Jesus and lived upon the earth?*
  - *How did Jesus demonstrate grace and truth through his life?*
  - *What does it mean to become a “child of God?”*

## Encourage Application

10. Direct learners to the *Study Guide* sidebar “Becoming a Child of God.” Read it aloud and then ask, *Which of these steps do you need to follow today?* Allow a moment for learners to pray for themselves and one another.
11. Refer learners again to the question in Step 1: *Which would you prefer as a gift: grace or truth?* Ask:
  - *As Christ-followers, what does lacking these traits cost us?*
  - *Are you more adept at showing grace or truth?*
  - *How can you work on showing both grace and truth this week?*
12. Close the lesson in prayer, asking God for strength to follow him as Jesus did, with grace and truth.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect with Life

1. As class members arrive, ask them to consider the following question written on the markerboard or a poster: *How important is the first sentence of a book?* Ask learners to give examples of memorable first sentences.
2. Inform leaders that this lesson begins a new study in the Gospel of John. Say, *John wished to reveal to his readers the truth of Jesus’ eternal nature, and his first sentence illustrates that truth.* Transition into the lesson with a prayer.

### Guide Bible Study

3. Introduce the study by briefly highlighting the differences between the beginning of John and the other three Gospels. Use the “Bible Comments” in this *Teaching Guide* to help make the transition between the introduction and the beginning of the lesson. When finished, read John 1:1–3 aloud.

4. Direct learners to the *Study Guide* sidebar “Understanding the Logos” and recruit someone read it aloud. Ask the following questions:
  - *How is the Word different from other revelations from God?*
  - *What actions did the Word have in Creation?*
  - *How would you explain the Word to someone who doesn’t accept the Bible as being from God?*
5. Read verses 4–5 aloud and give a short explanation of the terms “light” and “life.” Then ask the class to respond to these questions:
  - *How has the light overcome darkness?*
  - *What can we do when it seems that darkness is winning?*
6. Recruit a class member to read verses 6–8 aloud. Discuss John the Baptist’s work as a witness. Ask the learners to give examples of how Christ-followers can be witnesses today. (Responses may include: in our workplaces, in our leisure activities, and so forth.)
7. Read verses 9–13 aloud. Using the “Bible Comments,” give a brief explanation of why the world rejected the light. Ask:
  - *Is the light still rejected today? If so, why?*
  - *What do we stand to lose if we refuse the light today?*
8. Recruit someone to read verses 14–18 aloud. Using the “Bible Comments,” give a brief explanation of the Incarnation. Then ask:
  - *What does Jesus’ identity tell us about God’s heart for us?*
  - *How do you see grace and truth lived out in Jesus’ life?*

## Encourage Application

9. Reread John 1:12 aloud. Direct learners to the *Study Guide* sidebar “Becoming a Child of God,” and use it to explain what it means to “receive him.” Give class members a moment to examine if they have received Christ. Be willing to discuss the topic further with anyone who wishes to do so after class.
10. Say, *Jesus reveals God to us* (verse 18). Ask, *What would people know about God if they watched your life this week?*

11. Challenge class members to discover and commit to two ways they can show grace and truth to someone in the coming week. Close the lesson with prayer.

**Notes**

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1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–4 are from the New Revised Standard Version (1989).