

Understanding Jesus

Lesson 2

John 1:1-5

Opener

The story is told of a man whose family was going to the Christmas Eve service at church. When his wife asked him to join them, he said he “just couldn’t believe all that stuff about God coming to earth as a man,” and that he would feel like a hypocrite if he went. So, off the family went, and he stayed home. As he sat in his chair reading, he heard a thumping sound. Then another. He went outside to see what it was, and he realized it was coming from his barn. As he entered the barn, he saw that a flock of birds seeking shelter from the cold had gotten caught in the barn and couldn’t find their way out. He tried to shoo them toward the entrance, but they only scattered and flew away from him in fear. Next, he got some bread and made a path of crumbs leading the way outside. But the birds were afraid of his scent and didn’t get near the bread. He began to get frustrated and he thought, “If only I could become one of them and speak their language. Then I could communicate with them and they would listen to me and I could show them the way.” At that moment he heard the church bells ringing. And sinking to his knees in the snow, he understood why Jesus came to earth.

Scripture

In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God. He was in the beginning with God. He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn’t make. Life itself was in him, and this life gives light to everyone. The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

Discussion

God, like the man in the story, had tried for centuries to help His children understand the truth about who He was. He had tried desperately to show them His purpose for their lives—to have a relationship with Him, but most of them chose to turn away. So He sent His Son Jesus to earth to communicate His truth in a way they could understand it.

John’s book, perhaps more than any other, focuses on who Jesus Christ is and the message He came to tell. John 3:16 summarizes this message: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”

vv. 1-2

The first three words of this verse are the same words used to begin the Bible: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Ask: Why do you think John used this?

At the time John wrote this book, many people were questioning the true identity of Jesus. Some were probably uncertain whether He was a prophet, a good man, or really the Messiah. Thus, it was important for John to begin his book by asserting the true nature of Christ. John tells us in John 20:31 the purpose of his book: “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in Him you will have life.” So John wants us to understand Jesus’ identity right from the start.

John establishes three characteristics of Jesus Christ in the first verse:

1. He was present at the Creation of the world.
2. He was with God even at the beginning of time.
3. He is God.

Again John wants the reader to fully understand that Jesus has been around since the beginning of time.

Ask: Why do you think John refers to Christ as “the Word”?

Jesus came to communicate the truth of God’s plan of salvation for all people. Therefore, He was the Word of God on earth. Just like in our story of the birds, God needed to become one of us so that we could understand his message. Jesus was the Word of God.

v. 3

Not only was Jesus present and with God in the beginning, but He is the creator. It may be hard to believe that a man who had lived and died on earth was the creator of the world, but this is what John wants the reader to understand.

**At this point, teachers may need to further explain how Jesus the Son, God the Father and the Holy Spirit are all one—the Trinity. A good way to understand this is to think of an egg: it has three parts (the shell, the yolk and the white) but all are part of the whole and make up the egg.

Although God wants us to know certain things about Him and have a relationship with Him, we must realize that His wisdom is beyond understanding and some things we must accept by faith.

vv. 4-5

Not only is Jesus the creator of life—He IS life. Only through Him can we gain eternal life. John wants us to understand that Jesus is the source of all life—both earthly life and eternal life. And this life is a light in the darkness of sin and death. Even though the world may seem like a very dark place, the light of Jesus can cast away this darkness. It is comforting to know that “the darkness can never extinguish” the light. Jesus is the victorious one!

We already know the end of the story of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, so we know that what John says here is true: evil cannot put out the light of Jesus Christ!

Questions:

Ask: What do you believe about Jesus?

Ask: Why is the identity of Jesus so important? Does it make a difference in your life?

Let's review the statements John makes in these verses about Jesus.

1. Jesus is God.
2. Jesus was in the beginning with God.
3. Jesus was the Creator.
4. Jesus is life.
5. Jesus is light.
6. The darkness (evil) can never overcome the light.

If we believe all of these things about Jesus, this knowledge should make a real difference in our life! You simply cannot believe these things about Him and not let it change you forever.

Search your heart to determine what you believe about Christ. Commit your life to Him—either for the first time or as a renewal to Him. Remember—He loves you very much. That is why He came. He couldn't stand to watch us wander in the dark any longer. So He came to light our way. We must accept the light and share it with others. What is your commitment today?

How do you commit your life to Jesus?

1. First, you must repent of your sins. To repent means to ask God to forgive your sins AND to turn away from your sinful ways and follow God's ways.
2. Second, you pray and ask God to come into your heart and life. You commit your life to him and to following His will for your life.
3. Third, you strengthen your relationship with God by reading your Bible, praying, and attending Bible Study regularly.