



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

## Three Truths From an Old Man

### The Gospel of John

### John 1:1–18

Tim Badal | August 29, 2021

Please turn in God's Word to the Gospel of John. In this book, the incredible story of the gospel was declared by one of Jesus' closest associates. Here we will see how God can revolutionize our lives as He did the Apostle John.

Let me ask you a series of questions this morning:

- At the end of your life, when your friends and family are gathered around, or when they're remembering you at the funeral service, what are they going to say about you?
- What were their favorite experiences with you?
- What will they say about your personality or about the things you taught them?
- What did they love about you that they hope will continue as a legacy after you're gone?

Let's dig a little deeper:

- Knowing you're not perfect, what are the things they might say irritated them about you?
- What things might they say about the not-so-pretty moments in your life when you weren't at your best?
- What would they say about the potential you had that you never tapped into?

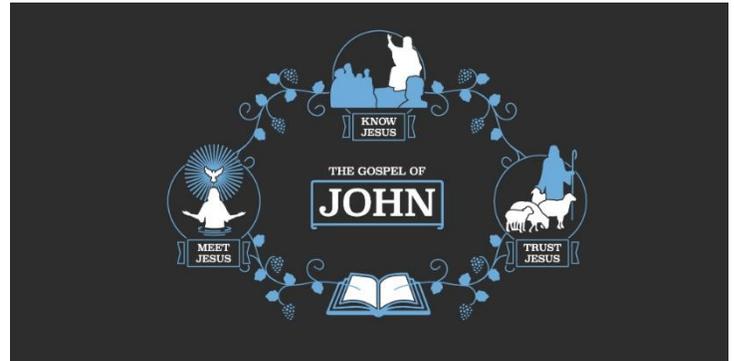
You see, after we're gone, people are going to tell our stories. They're going to speak about the times in our lives that most impacted them.

Today we're going to be looking at a story—a true story—about Jesus presented from the person whom I believe was His best friend. The Apostle John wrote this story about 50 years after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. He wrote it because of his love for Jesus because he had been transformed by Jesus and because he wanted to share with the world Who Jesus was and why He is worth following, obeying and trusting.

John's story wasn't the first one to be written. We know there are three other books that were written earlier. Matthew wrote his version of the story to a specific group of people—the Jews. His purpose for writing the Gospel of Matthew was to tell the Jewish people that Jesus was in fact the Messiah, the great King of Israel, to whom the patriarchs looked forward and of whom the prophets foretold. Over and over again, Matthew went to the Old Testament prophecies to demonstrate how Jesus specifically fulfilled what had been promised. His purpose was also to encourage his readers to worship and adore Him as the Christ.

The second story was written by a man named Mark whose intended audience was the Romans. Like Americans, Romans were drawn to action, wanting to be where the action is. So we find Mark using a certain word over and over again: the word "immediately." He moves quickly from one event to another event in Jesus' life. This book, the shortest of the stories, was intended to show that Jesus is the Master, the King, the highest rung on the ladder. In light of this, Mark says, the readers are to serve, to be kind and to take care of others. That's an important truth, because Mark was writing to the Romans, who at that point were at the top of the social ladder. Mark pointed out that even though Jesus was God, He sought to serve those around him.

The third story was told by Luke. His Gospel was written mainly to the Greeks who loved details and nuance. They wanted the backstory—which is of course what we find in their mythologies—so it's not uncommon for Luke to talk about the weather, how the hillside looked or what the journeys were like. His purpose was not only to demonstrate that Jesus was God Who also served



and that He was the promised Messiah, but Luke also wanted his Greek readers to understand that Jesus was the perfect man. Jesus embodied what the Greek philosophers said people should strive for. Jesus had the greatest intellect; He could perform signs and wonders. Luke wanted his audience to know that Jesus was the pinnacle of humanity.

Today we're starting our study of the fourth story about Jesus. What does John have to say that the other three hadn't already covered? It's interesting that much of what John wrote were things the other three writers left completely out. This essentially is new information. Writing as an old man, John chose not so much to focus on the "what," but more on the "why." He wanted us to know why Jesus came, why He loved people the way He did, why He served, why He said the things He said. His audience wasn't specifically to a certain group, like the Jews, the Romans or the Greeks. In fact, ten different times John specifically described his audience by addressing them as "the world." We're going to see this in the opening verses this morning. John wants us to know two truths about Jesus. One, that Jesus is God, and two, that Jesus came to save us from our sins.

This is not an exhaustive story. That is, it doesn't give all the details about Jesus' life. At the end of the Gospel of John he wrote, "If I told you everything I knew about Jesus and all I experienced with Him, there aren't enough books in the world to contain it" (John 21:25). Then even though it's not exhaustive, John also explains that he wants to emphasize something in particular. So at the end of his Gospel, he also says, "The reason I'm writing these things about Jesus is so you might believe and trust Him as your Savior" (John 20:31).

Before we go further, I want to take John's example and apply it to our lives. John had been persecuted and beaten, then eventually exiled to the island of Patmos. He had experienced all this as a result of his faith in Jesus Christ. So his purpose in writing this book was so others might believe. So are you telling the story of Jesus to the watching world around you? Are you speaking the truths of what you've experienced and what you know about Jesus, with a desire that the people you encounter might believe? Our calling is to go and make disciples, teaching them all that Christ has taught us (Matthew 28:18-20). John shows us how this can be done. "This is what I've experienced with Jesus and I'm telling you these things so you will believe." May this be what we do this week when we're with others.

How does John begin his story? Most of the time when we speak about those who are gone, we first mention who we are. Each time I do a funeral, I give time for those who were closest to the deceased person to share a story or memory of the person who's gone. Like clockwork, this person first explains who they are and how they are related to person being honored—a relative, neighbor or friend. This helps the listeners understand the context for whatever stories will follow.

Likewise, there's usually this kind of introduction when a story is told, but in the Gospel of John, John doesn't mention himself at all. Twice in the letter when he mentions the name John, he's talking about John the Baptist. He's not talking about himself.

Why doesn't he introduce himself? Basically, when Jesus is the subject, John lets Him have all the oxygen. In his opening remarks, John simply gushes about his Savior. He worships the God of the universe—and that's what I want us to do here as well. This morning we're going to learn three truths from an old man.

## **My friend Jesus is it.**

The first truth I want to speak on this morning is this: "My friend Jesus is it." In other words, He's my all-in-all, He's my everything, He's the first, He's the last (to steal words from Barry White). He is everything. But why would John say this? What did John know about his friend that would cause him to say Jesus is it?

### **Jesus is Lord.**

First, it's because John saw Jesus as Lord. It's right there in the opening verse: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*" (John 1:1-3).

The reason why John begins his book by telling his readers that Jesus is everything is because in the beginning, before there was time or space or heaven or earth, there was God in the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus is eternal. Remember, John is writing to a varied audience. The Jewish readers would realize that John's words were very much like the first words in the Old Testament: "*In the beginning...*" They would begin to remember the words of Moses in Genesis 1:1.

In the opening lines of his story, John is declaring that Jesus is the boss. Jesus is in charge. There's not one element or aspect or iota of who we are, what we have or what we do that isn't under the lordship of Jesus Christ. So when we come to Jesus, the first thing we must do is acknowledge that He is Lord and we are His servants. Only then will we experience His goodness and grace toward us.

What makes Him Lord? First, it's because He's eternal. Second, He's equal to the God. He was in the beginning with God and He is God. Right away, John has put himself in the position of being accused by the people of being a blasphemer. He was saying the man Jesus was and is God. That would tick off the Jews in his audience. The Greeks however might have been intrigued. They were wondering if Jesus was just one more of the many gods they worshiped. But John says Jesus was God. The Romans would have had a problem, because in that day they believed Caesar was god. But when Jesus came into the world, He essentially shut down all earthly philosophies. He was different from any other being.

I know a church that believes Jesus was the greatest of all time; I like that church. Okay, this church. So brothers and sisters, when we claim to be followers of Jesus, we are believing in the eternal God, One Who is equal to God. That distinguishes us from Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses who believe Jesus was created by God and now is just farther along than the rest of us, but that's not the Jesus of the Scriptures.

The Bible tells us we are His servants and that He is in charge. This reminds us that in anything and everything we do, we must funnel our dreams and purposes through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

John then continues to explain that this Jesus, Who is eternal and equal with the Father, is also the Creator of all things. *"All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made"* (John 1:4). The reason Jesus gets to be the boss, the reason why He is Lord, is because He created everything. So everything we have in our possession belongs to Him, because He's the One Who created it, Who oversees it and owns it. He gets to judge whether or not we've cared for these things according to His plans and purposes. This is the friend John is talking about.

### Jesus is light.

Not only did John see Jesus as Lord, but he also saw Him as light. John actually uses the word "light" 36 times in his Gospel, Four of those are in our text today—in verses four, seven, eight and nine. What does it mean that Jesus is light? There are two things Jesus does. He exposes darkness because that's what light does. Any time we're startled by a strange noise at night, we turn on the light to expose whatever is in our dark room. Secondly, Jesus enlightens what we see and understand. Through Jesus, we're able both to see the dark world and see God. In verse 18 we read, *"No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."* Jesus enables us to know Who God is and what He requires of us.

How does Jesus expose us to the world and to the Father? This happens through His Word. *"In the beginning was the Word..."* or in the Greek, *"the Logos."* He repeats this word three times. *"In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God."* Later in verse 14 he adds, *"And the Logos became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."*

The word *Logos* was a buzzword for the Greeks. It was the perfection of all rationale, the perfection of all intellect and the perfection of all strategy. It was the pinnacle of everything the Greeks aspired to.

When the Jews heard this word, they were drawn back to Mt. Sinai when the word of God came to Moses. Essentially John is declaring that God has spoken.

Remember last year when we were studying the book of Hebrews, we read something similar: *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son"* (Hebrews 1:1-2). Jesus is the heart and mind of God personified. The Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 2:9, *"For in [Jesus] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily."* This is why John is telling us that Jesus is it.

### Jesus is life.

Jesus is Lord, Jesus is light, and third, Jesus is life. We read in John 1:4, *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men."* So, God is in glory, living in perfect community with the Son and the Holy Spirit. After the creation of the world, that Jesus is a part of, God puts man and woman in the garden. They're doing well for a while. We don't know how long that good relationship went. Then at

some point, man and woman rebelled against God, which created a great chasm between God and His creation. So the Trinity said to each other, "Heavens, we've got a problem!"

The Son says to the Father, "I will go and speak on Your behalf. I will tell the world where they've gone wrong and what they need to do to remedy the situation." The angels must have asked Him, "How are You going to do that? Are You going to draw it in the sky? Are you going to announce it from heaven?" Jesus said, "No, I'm going to become like them." Verse 14 says, *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."* Heaven came near. In living life with us, Jesus showed us how to live, how to obey the Father and what to pursue in this world. He did this so we might have life. In the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, Jesus says, *"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* In John 10:10, Jesus says, *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."*

So John says, "Let me tell you about my friend Jesus because He is eternal, He is equal with God, He is our Lord, He is our light and He is our life. I want you to know that He came into the world."

John then goes on in verses 9–11 to tell us the response Jesus received. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in our world! Jesus, the God of the universe, came and walked our streets. He came to our house. He lived among us. He ate with us. He played games with us. He talked with us. He healed us. He took care of our needs. He ministered to us. The God of the universe moved into the neighborhood and made His dwelling with us. This means He can be sympathetic to our needs, our issues and our struggles. He came into the world.

Although *"the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him."* He came to his own flesh and blood. More specifically, He came to the Jewish people, and *"his own people did not receive him."* There are two words there I want you to see: know and receive. They did not know Him; they did not receive Him. The idea here is an intellectual decision. Jesus came to the world. He displayed Himself and declared Himself. "Here I am. I am here for you." But the sinful world looked at Jesus and said to God, "You can have Him back."

## **Humanity is filled with imbeciles.**

John's second point, and the second truth we need to know, is that humanity is full of imbeciles. If you want a different word, maybe one that's a little nicer, humanity is full of idiots. You might say, "That's still not very nice." Well, we are idiots. Let that sink in. The Bible says we are fools, because instead of worshiping this Jesus, Who came to seek and save that which was lost, we told God, "Return Him. We don't want anything to do with Him. We don't need Him. We've got it all figured out." How crazy is that?

We're lost. The Bible says we're like sheep without a shepherd. That is, we're dumb animals; we don't know where to go or what to do. To illustrate this, let me tell you a story of something that happened recently to my family.

We were driving home from a baseball game. As we approached our town, we came to a fairly large creek with a bridge over it. We were about to cross the bridge, but there was something in the road that caused us to stop. It not only stopped us, but it stopped everyone on the road in both directions. What we saw was a big mother deer with three fawns. Now what probably comes to your mind is the early scenes in "Bambi" when he was barely able to walk on all four legs. These were young fawns like that. They were on the bridge, they saw the cars and they were freaking out.

Then the mother deer did the unthinkable. She bolted off, leaving the three fawns on their own. We were in the first car on one side. So we got out of our car, as did the people in the car on the other side. We tried to coax these three baby deer to safety, but it wasn't working. Then two of the fawns took off, so there was one left, standing in the middle of the bridge. I wanted to save that deer, so I moved slowly toward it. The deer thought I was Sasquatch and didn't know what to make of me. (Some of you are laughing way too much.) I was coming to save that deer. I wanted to rescue it. I wanted to make sure it didn't fall off the bridge. But do you know what it did? It saw me, ran to the side of the bridge and jumped off!

The deer fell into the water and made a lot of noise. But God in His goodness and grace had somehow taught that baby deer how to swim before it could walk well. Then it dawned on me. I was the answer to the deer's problem. I could have helped it. I wanted to return it to its mom. I wanted to take care of it. But because of its fear and instincts, that foolish deer decided to run from the person who was there to help.

That's the storyline of the Bible. If you want to sum up the Bible in just a few paragraphs, it's this: We got lost. Our Father in heaven looked down at us. and said, "Someone needs to go rescue them." Jesus, acting like our big brother, said, "I'll become one of them. I'll put on flesh so they won't be afraid of Me when I come. They would be afraid of You, Father, if You came. You're a big God."

So He said, "I'm going to put on flesh and humiliate Myself by becoming one of them. I'll go out into the world and start calling, 'Tim. Tim. Stop running away. You're getting too close to the edge of the bridge. You're heading into more harm. Come to Me. I know you're burdened. I know you're heavy laden. I want to give you rest. I love the world so much that I came to die for you, so you can have life.'" Because humanity has bought into the lies of the devil and rendered themselves imbeciles and fools, we run farther away from God, deeper into our sin and deeper into our lostness. Yet all the while the answer is running after us.

We sang this morning, "The goodness of God is running after me..." But humanity says, "I don't want it. I don't need it," going deeper and deeper into sin. Then do you know what we do? We blame God.

Jesus said, "I will go to earth and make a provision." What does He do? He puts on flesh, He makes His dwelling among us and we experience His glory. We experience His glory through teaching. We experience His glory through miracles. We experience His glory through the exorcising of demons. We see His glory when He raises the dead. We see His glory when He hangs on a cross. We see His glory when He rises from the tomb. We see His glory when He ascends to heaven. And now, seated at the right hand of the throne of God, He has filled us with His Holy Spirit. The only difference between us and the world is that when Jesus Christ came calling, there was something in us that listened.

Right away you might think, "Well, I've got more faith" or "I'm more holy." Nonsense! Look at verses 12: *"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."* It wasn't because of your decision or your intellect or the will of someone else. You were called to Him because of the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.

## God's grace is incredible.

So Jesus came, but we said, "God, we don't want anything to do with You." What John tells us, however, is that Jesus is it, that humanity is full of imbeciles, but also that God's grace is incredible. Because Jesus is full of grace and truth, He died for us, and through this He gives us the ability to have eternal life.

We read in verse 16, *"From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace."* God's grace is incredible. We didn't deserve it. We didn't earn it. But Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). This God of the universe humiliated Himself, but with hostility, we put Him on the cross. Although we were God's enemies, He made us children of God.

So what do you know about Jesus? What have you experienced with Jesus? Maybe Jesus has been calling you, but in your ignorance, in your foolishness, you just keep running away. Listen to me. Turn around and give your life to Jesus. John says, "I write you these things so that you may believe."

If you've come here today not believing in Jesus, stop running from Him and run to the voice that's crying out. Whether you hear it through John the Baptist, this preacher now or the still small voice of the Holy Spirit—whatever voice is calling you to heed the voice of heaven, respond before it's too late. You will never experience the grace, love, mercy, comfort and peace of Almighty God that has been made available through Jesus Christ without believing in His name. When you do, as we're going to learn in this series, it will change your life. It will transform you.

John was a fisherman. John thought he knew what he was doing until he started to hear the words of a guy named John the Baptist. Then as they were hanging out together, John the Baptist said, "Look, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29-34). Then John and his brother James left the one they were following and followed Jesus. As they listened to and heeded the words He spoke, as they saw Jesus show His power and glory through His works, over time they were changed.

The same opportunity is before you and me. Will you believe in this Jesus? Will you allow Him to change you? Over time, you will trust Him with more of your life. In doing so, you will experience the abundant life God longs for you to have.