

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JOHN 1

Author Robert Frost summed up all he had learned about life in the phrase, “Life goes on.” Life has no time outs, intermissions, or half-times. Life never takes a break to let you catch your breath. *Life marches on.*

And the key to a fulfilling life is to find some meaning along the journey. This was the quest of the ancient Greeks. They scoured life for its overarching purpose.

The Greeks noticed that life operates by natural laws. This indicated *a kind of logic or intelligent force* behind the order and symmetry that characterizes life.

The Greek philosophers coined a term for this ultimate meaning, *the logos* - or in English, “*the Word.*”

And this was the goal of Greek philosophy: to identify the *logos* or *reason behind reality*. They examined the visible world for expressions of life’s *unseen purpose*.

Yet despite great wisdom, the Greek philosophers failed to find the answer. Their search for meaning was a bust - summed up by the man who quoted Robert Frost, *but with a twist* - “Life goes on, I just forgot why.”

The Apostle John wrote to a Greek audience, and he must’ve shocked his readers. For in this first chapter he answers the question that had stumped their famed philosophers for centuries. John had good news!

The *Word* had been *heard!* The unseen revealed!

There is a God, and He's made known His purposes in a Word. **The logos** the Greeks searched for was not a *primal force*, but a *person named Jesus*.

Jesus is *the reason behind reality - the logos behind the cosmos*. Jesus Christ is the residence of *absolute truth, of undiluted love, of eternal life*. Life goes on, and it's all about *Jesus!* Come to Him, and you'll find your life's true purpose! This is the theme of John's gospel.

And he starts with a bang, "**In the beginning was the Word (or Logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**" Jesus is the Word and "***the Word was God.***" Here's an emphatic declaration of Jesus' deity.

Just as my words are the expression of my mind and heart, ***the Word*** is the expression of God. Hebrews 1:1-2 tell us that in times past God spoke through Hebrew prophets, but in these last days, He's spoken to us by His Son. Jesus is God's final word to humanity.

The Nike Swoosh may be the sporting world's most famous logo. It's everywhere. Nike pays teams to wear their Swoosh. It's nothing but a fat apostrophe, but all over the world, it's instantly recognizable. It stands for what Nike promotes - ***speed, skill, athleticism, victory.***

And God also has a logo. *His Word* became flesh.

A baby - a little apostrophe, *if you will* - was born in Bethlehem. **When you think of God's *infinite wisdom*, and *ultimate power*, and *perfect love* - you should think of Jesus. Our Lord is God's logo - He's God's Swoosh.**

All of the Nike Corporation's goals and culture are encapsulated and expressed in their Swoosh. Likewise, all of God is packed up and revealed in Jesus Christ.

Yet, here's a difference in *a logo* and *the logos*. Nike created its Swoosh, whereas the Logos of God was before creation. John says of Jesus, verse 2, "He was in the beginning with God." Jesus is the expression or logos of God, but He's more... He is God Himself!

The Greek word for God is "Theos," and John says the Logos and Theos are one in the same. Jesus was preexistent and uncreated. He was *with God* and *was God* before time began... **The key to life is Jesus.**

Verse 3, "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

In Genesis 1:26, on the sixth day of creation, God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness." God referred to Himself by a plural pronoun.

The Bible teaches there is one, true God, but that one God eternally exists in three persons: *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. Christians refer to God's nature by the term *Trinity*. God is a blend of *unity and diversity*. He's one God, but God exists in three distinct persons.

And the Father was not alone in creation. All three members of the Trinity played a role. In the Bible's opening scene the **Spirit of God** hovers over the water. Then the **Father God** speaks through the **Word of God**, Jesus, "Let there be light; and there was light." As John says, "All things were made through Him."

And, **“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”** Modern genetics enable us to engineer the coding of life. Scientists can manipulate the genes of tomatoes to yield specific flavors, and program flowers to produce different colors. Geneticists tinker with the molecule’s DNA, but they can’t produce life itself. Life comes from God. John says it originates in Jesus.

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

Thus, the key to improving our quality of life isn’t found in unlocking our DNA, but in submitting to God and His desire to spiritually transform us. Rather than undo the fall. Through Christ, we can be redeemed.

Jesus’ life is the template or prototype of what every life was meant to be. His life was *“the light of men.”*

The ancient Greeks thought life consisted of four elements: **light, breath, water, and bread.** And this is what shapes John’s depiction of Jesus in his gospel...

In Chapter 1, Jesus is **the Light of life.**

In Chapter 3, He’s portrayed as **the Breath of Life.**

In Chapter 4, He’s **the Water of Life.**

In Chapter 6, He calls Himself **the Bread of Life.**

John also writes in verse 5, **“And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”**

Did you hear about the colony of mice that lived deep inside the grand piano? From the beginning, the mice enjoyed the beautiful music that came from the piano. The music lighted up their dark piano world. Common sense told them that such

music was no accident. All mice believed in a "[Great Unseen Pianist](#)."

Until one day, an inquisitive mouse crawled into a part of the piano no mouse had been before. He reported back that vibrating wires made the music. Then another mouse went deeper into the guts of the piano and said the first mouse was wrong. The music was made by felt-hammers striking the wires. The mice concluded their world was mechanical and impersonal.

The Great Unseen Pianist must've been an ancient myth. A primitive speculation of what now could be explained. Yet sadly, they only looked inside the piano, not outside, to the Great Pianist who sat at the keys.

And what happened to the mice colony in their piano world has happened to modern man in God's world.

We've scratched the surface of knowledge, and have learned a bit about the mechanics of God's creation. We've concluded the music of life is the result of wires and hammers. All the while we've ignored the all-knowing and all-talented Pianist sitting at the keyboard.

Friends, if you've not discovered Jesus, it's because you're only looking inside the piano. You're searching in the dark piano world - rather than looking outside the piano. For there is a light shining into our darkness.

With Jesus, God shined a light into our dark world. But John says we are so used to the dark the light hurts our eyes - we cover them, rather than receive the light.

This is why God sent a helper to open our eyes to the light of God. Verse 6, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” Not the author and the disciple, *the Apostle John*, but *John the Baptist*.

“This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”

The moon has no light of its own. It only reflects the light of the sun. Likewise, John was not the light. Like the moon, he simply reflected the light of God’s Son.

“That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.” Here’s the greatest tragedy of history.

The Creator, the light of the world, visited the world He created, yet His creation failed to recognize Him.

Verse 11, “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” Jesus of Nazareth suffered from a tragic case of mistaken identity. “He came to His own...” the Jews. These were the people who could’ve recognized Him. Through prophecies and pictures, the Hebrews were taught what Messiah would be like. If they’d been looking *without prejudice* - they would’ve seen God’s nature, and love, and promises in the person of Jesus.

But there was evil in their hearts. And rather than receive the truth, it caused them to try and silence it.

Verse 12, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in

His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Understand, the Jews felt it was *their* right to be “*children of God.*” They assumed membership in God’s family was a matter of pedigree, and of privilege, and of performance. And they possessed all three...

They were **born** of the bloodline of Abraham.

They **behaved** according to the Law of Moses.

And salvation was **bestowed** on them by priestly pronouncements. *But they were completely wrong!*

Salvation is granted by God and God alone. He sets its terms, and issues pardons, and regenerates spirits.

Salvation has never come via blood or birth... or by the strength of the flesh... or by permission of a man or men... In short, **by breed**, or by **deed**, or by **decree**.

God alone hands out salvation, and He’s chosen to give it only to people who trust their lives to His Son.

Verse 14, “**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...**” The Greek word translated “*dwelt*” means “**to pitch a tent.**” Jesus was God camping among us.

I love the paraphrase, “**The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.**” God came to the hood! He stepped out of heaven to walk our mean streets! This gives Jesus some **street cred!** In short, **God became a mouse and moved into the piano.**

And please, don’t gloss over this miracle! The logos, the source and culmination of life, **fashioned a body from human**

blubber... slid from eternity into time through a woman's birth canal... was wrapped tightly in strips of scrap fabric... then laid in a feed trough.

God entered the world through the lowest door.

He stooped down to lift us up. God now cries when we cry, laughs when we laugh, hurts when we hurt.

The Greeks figured the Logos created the universe and then went into hiding. But John says Jesus not only created the universe, He joined it... *to save it.*

Verse 14 continues, *“And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* I once had a friend who worked in a nuclear lab. Whenever I saw him I'd jokingly say, *“Man, there's a special glow about you.”* But that was true of Jesus.

“We beheld His glory,” John says.

I don't think Jesus glowed in the dark or had a phosphorescent tint about Him. But you knew Jesus had been with the Father. He had an authority about Him. Jesus was only 30-something years old, but He seemed timeless. Everything about our Lord smacked of the supernatural. Traces of God were all over Him.

What really set Jesus apart was a blend of *“grace and truth.”* There was *no harshness in the truth He spoke*, and *no compromise in the grace He showed*. He called out and forgave sin with an equal boldness.

And note what John calls Jesus, *“the only begotten of the Father.”* The other Gospels teach us that Jesus was born of a virgin. God was His father, not Joseph.

When Jesus was conceived, God's Spirit borrowed Mary's womb. A divine seed nestled in a human cradle.

Mary's child was no mere man, but God's offspring.

No one else can claim this kind of exclusivity and physical origin. Jesus is "*the only begotten*" of God.

Verse 15 shifts back to John the Baptist. "*John bore witness of (Jesus) and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"*" John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins. John was six months Jesus' elder. Yet here John speaks of Jesus' pre-existence.

He said Jesus "*was before me.*" For unlike us, Jesus' birth was not His beginning. John knew Jesus had shared eternity with the Father before coming to earth.

"*And of His fullness, we have all received, and grace for grace.*" There's a Dennis the Menace comic strip that perfectly defines God's grace. Dennis and his buddy, Joey, are walking home from the Wilsons'. Their hands are full of cookies. Their faces are covered with crumbs and chocolate smudges, *and great, big smiles.*

Joey asks, "*I wonder what we did to deserve this?*"

Dennis - normally a menace - a young man certainly in need of God's grace, answers, "*Look Joey, Mrs. Wilson gives us cookies not because we're nice, but because she's nice.*" And this is grace! It's unprompted love. It originates in God, not in us. It's never earned or purchased. "*Grace is love that's on the house!*"

And Jesus is full of this grace. His love is *“grace for grace.”* Jesus is not only full of grace toward us - He fills us with grace toward others. Grace is love for us, and it’s also power to love others as we’ve been loved.

Verse 17, *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”*

Through the Law, Moses revealed God’s rules and righteousness - but through Jesus, God revealed the truth of His intentions and the reality of amazing grace.

Moses said don’t cross that line, while Jesus says I’ll bear the cross for you... Moses said you better not, Jesus says trust Me, and I’ll make you better... Moses said you don’t deserve God’s blessing, whereas Jesus serves up blessings that none of us deserve...

If you want justice, see Moses, but if you need mercy and grace, call on Jesus! Grace came through Jesus.

Think of it this way, *“Moses wrote traffic tickets, but Jesus teaches us to drive safely.”* And here’s the challenge for a church... *Do we issue citations, or do we get folks into the car and teach them how to drive?*

Christians are agents of God’s grace, yet too many churches act like disciples of Moses... The Law gets preached every Sunday - *“Do this and do that.”* Too many churches are judgmental and legalistic.

At Calvary Chapel, we want to be *a grace place.* *“The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”* *Whose disciples are we?*

Verse 18, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” Exodus 33 tells the story of how Moses saw God’s backside. Not His face, but His back.

Apparently, under the Law, that was as close to God as anyone got. But now, the Son has “declared” God.

The Greek term translated “declared” is “exegesis,” which means “to explain or unfold.” A good Bible Study is sometimes called an “exegesis” of the text.

Well, Jesus is the exegesis of God. Watch Jesus, listen to Him, and you get a sermon on God. His whole life is a divine revelation. He is *the Word made flesh!*

Verse 19 again shifts back to John the Baptist, Jesus’ advance man. He paved the way for Jesus with the message of repentance. We’re told, “Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”

John the Baptist lived an austere life. He came out of the wilderness munching on locust and wild honey. He lacked the refinement of the Jerusalem priesthood, yet people from all over Israel flocked to listen to John.

John told people to repent of their sin; then dunked them in the river. It was a symbol of God’s cleansing.

Jerusalem’s religious hierarchy saw John as a threat to their influence. So they send a posse of priests to interrogate him, and question him, “Who are you?”

Verse 20, "He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." "Christ" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew "Messiah" or "Anointed One."

"And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." According to the last chapter of the OT, Elijah is to return before the coming of Messiah.

And this will happen... Revelation 11 mentions two witnesses appearing on Earth prior to Jesus' second coming. It's my opinion one of them will be Elijah.

These priests knew Malachi's prophecy, and they asked John if he was Elijah. John had said elsewhere that he had come in "the spirit and power of Elijah." But here, he makes it clear that "no, he is NOT Elijah."

The priests also ask him if he is "the Prophet."

This was a reference to Deuteronomy 18:15. Moses predicted God would raise up a prophet like him. The fulfillment of which was the Messiah Jesus, *not John*.

So they continue their interrogation, "Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

He said: "I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Make straight the way of the LORD," as the prophet Isaiah said." And John quotes Isaiah 40:3.

Isaiah mentioned an unnamed prophet - "a voice of one crying." And John is saying, "I'm that voice. I'm not Messiah. I'm not the guy, I'm just the cry." What was vital about John was his message, not the messenger.

In the first century, it was common for visiting dignitaries to send out an advance team. They traveled the route the king would pass. Dangerous bends in the road were straightened out. Potholes were repaired.

Their job was to make sure the coast was clear for the king's arrival. And this was John's job. It was to make straight the way of the Messiah who would come after him. John's ministry was to point folks to Jesus.

Author Pam Pettler has a chapter in her book "The Joy Of Stress." It's titled, "*They're Getting Ahead of You.*" She tells the story of a graduate student at the University of California. This was an intense, highly competitive young man with great ambitions. Yet one day, while in the library, the fellow went berserk...

The police arrested him, as he shouted at the other students, "*Stop! Stop! You're getting ahead of me!*"

How do you respond when you realize other people are getting ahead of you? It's been said, "*Just when you start winning the rat race, you meet faster rats.*"

In fact, while you're here today, *there's a salesman planning his day tomorrow, hoping to get the jump on you... Or a musician practicing... Or a ballplayer training... all of them hoping to best you in some way.*

How do we respond? John the Baptist ran his race faithfully and left it up to God where He would finish.

Are we trying to be somebody - *even somebody for God?* Or are we content to be a nameless voice? Not a *celebrity*, or *THE* guy - but just a *cry out* for our Lord?

Verse 24, “Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him, saying, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” To baptize required a divine authority...

“John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.” The Coming One, Jesus, has the real authority.

For compared to Jesus, John wasn't worthy to untie His Master's sandal - *the job of the humblest slave*.

Verse 28, “These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.”

It's interesting, John baptized near the Jordan River where God had rolled back the waters so Joshua and Israel could cross over on dry land. That crossing and John's baptism were both a signal of new beginnings.

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Realize, prior to this moment for 1500 years the Jewish sacrificial system had produced an ocean of blood. Millions of animals were sacrificed.

They all pointed to the supreme, climactic sacrifice, to end all sacrifices - the cross of Jesus. The Son of God will spill His

sinless blood. His sacrifice will do what all the others *foreshadowed*, but *fell short* of accomplishing, obtain for us a permanent pardon.

And John is clear that Jesus will not only die for Israel's sin but for the sin of all humanity, for all time.

Once, a mom read to her daughter the story of Abraham and Isaac. The little girl heard how Abraham strapped Isaac to the wood, raised his knife, and at the last second, God stopped his hand. He provided a ram for the altar. The mom considered the story a beautiful testimony to God's faithfulness. But the young girl had a different take... **She said, "I don't like killing animals."**

When we hear Jesus called "*The Lamb of God*" we can miss the obvious! When you offered a sacrifice you took a lamb and slit its throat. It convulsed, squirted blood, squirmed painfully; then collapsed. It was awful.

And you were probably attached to that lamb. It was like killing a pet. Temple Jews never heard the word "**sacrifice**" and reacted glibly. They knew the cost.

Thus, when John points to Jesus and shouts, "*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" I'm sure he said it triumphantly, but he also said it with a tear in his eye. He knew what it would mean for Jesus.

John continues speaking of Jesus, verse 30, "*This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'*" "I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." We think of Jesus and John as teenagers sitting by

the campfire dreaming of their destiny years beforehand, but not so!

John was familiar with Jesus (*they were cousins*) but it wasn't until he baptized Jesus, and God's Spirit came upon Him, that John was certain Jesus was Messiah.

Verse 32, "And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

God Himself affirmed Jesus' identity to John.

It wasn't the stories he'd heard from his mother, Elizabeth, and her encounters with Mary... It wasn't even discussion with Jesus that persuaded him... John saw God's Spirit come upon Jesus at His baptism. God spoke to him directly and identified Jesus as Messiah!

Verse 35 introduces us to Jesus' first two disciples.

"Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." These men were originally followers of John before he pointed them to Jesus. *John prepared the way; then got out of the way.*

Verse 38, "Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where

are You staying?" These guys were Peter and Andrew. They wanted to learn from Jesus.

"He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour)." The days started at 6 AM, so this is now 4:00 in the afternoon.

"One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ)."

"And he brought him to Jesus." Three times Andrew is mentioned in the Scripture, and He's always bringing somebody to Jesus! We need to be like Andrew, and bring folks to Jesus! *And we can start with our own family.* Here, Andrew brings his brother, **Simon Peter.**

Verse 42, "Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephias" (which is translated, A Stone)." "*Cephias*" is Aramaic, the common language spoken on the streets of Jerusalem in Jesus' day. Aramaic was a language from Babylon. Jesus probably spoke it 90% of the time.

Here, Jesus renames Simon, "*Cephias,*" or "*stone.*" Later He'll repeat this name change by giving Simon a Greek name, "*Petra or Peter,*" which means "*rock.*"

Often when a person made a dramatic turnabout in their life they would take a new name. Jesus will transform His disciple, Peter, from *shifty* to *solid rock.*

“The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.”

And Philip did. Tradition tells us that after Jesus’ resurrection Philip preached the Gospel in what is today, Turkey. In 54 AD he was scourged and crucified for Christ... Philip followed Jesus for the rest of his life.

“Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter (their hometown)...” Bethsaida was a fishing village on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

And Philip’s decision had set off a chain reaction...

Andrew found Peter. Jesus found Philip. Philip finds his buddy, Nathaniel. Verse 45, “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Nathaniel was justifiably skeptical. This tiny Galilean village had a seedy reputation. Nazareth sat at the crossroads of several caravan routes. It was like a South Georgia truck stop - the kind of place that would produce *a son-of-a-gun, not the Son of God*. Thus he scoffed, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*”

And I love Philip’s reply, “(He) said to him, “Come and see.” This is how Jesus responded to Andrew and Peter in verse 39. In fact, the phrase, “*come and see*” was used by the rabbis. It meant “*Let's sit down and investigate the matter - let's examine it personally.*”

And I hope this is your attitude toward Jesus and Christianity - *“come and see”* for yourself. Don't just listen to what other people say. Investigate personally.

Verse 47, *“Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”* Jesus had yet to meet Nathanael, yet He had supernatural knowledge of him. Jesus knew he was open-minded and would assess the facts fairly...

“Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

While Nathanael was questioning, *can anything good come from Nazareth*, far away, in Jesus' mind's eye, He had seen Nathanael under a fig tree, enjoying its shade, munching its fruit, talking this over with Philip.

Nathanael was impressed with Jesus' prophetic powers. He *“answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”* Jesus had seen across time and space - what no man could naturally see. It caused Nathanael to believe in Jesus.

Verse 50, *“Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.”* In other words, *“You ain't seen nothing yet!”*

“And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

This is a reference to Genesis 28, and Jacob's ladder. Remember, Jacob was on the run from his brother, Esau, when he had a vision of a ladder to heaven. It was as if God was dropping Jacob a rope.

Nathanael may've been meditating on Genesis 28 when Philip approached him. Jesus is saying He is the ladder of which Genesis spoke - *the way from God to man*. Nathanael will know God by following Jesus.

Over the next three years, Nathanael did see heaven come to earth. He saw the miraculous and the angelic.

Think of all Nathanael would've missed had he not accepted the invitation to "come and see..." Don't you miss out on what Jesus has for you... "Come and see!"

For in just John's first chapter we learn that Jesus is the logos, the life, the light, the lamb, and the ladder.

He'll be all that to you and more if you trust Him. It's my hope that you will, and that you'll follow Him today!