

Session 2 — Is There Meaning in a Confusing World?

John 1:1–5 — Jesus, the Eternal Word and Light

Main question: *When life feels confusing and uncertain, where can I find an unchanging foundation?*

Big Idea: Before Jesus came into the world as a man, He already existed eternally with the Father. He is God's living Word, the Creator, the source of life, and the Light that darkness can never overcome.

Memory verse: John 1:1 or 1:5

Session goal

By the end of this study, we should understand:

- Jesus did not begin at Bethlehem.
 - Jesus is fully God and yet distinct from the Father.
 - God created everything through His Son.
 - Jesus fulfills the Old Testament ideas of the Word of the LORD and divine Wisdom.
 - God's light continues shining despite the world's darkness.
 - John's Gospel begins with a "new creation" story.
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Opening question: "When life feels uncertain, where do you naturally look for stability?"

Historical Context

Who wrote this?

The Apostle John. One of Jesus' closest disciples. An eyewitness.

Why did John begin this way?

- Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy.
- Mark begins with John the Baptist.
- Luke begins with Jesus' birth announcements.
- John begins before creation itself.
- John wants readers to know that Jesus is not merely another prophet.
- He is the eternal Creator.

Audience

- Both Jews and Gentiles.
 - Jewish readers would immediately recognize Genesis 1.
 - Greek readers would recognize the concept of the *logos* ("word"), but John fills that familiar term with distinctly biblical meaning rather than Greek philosophical speculation. His explanation is rooted in Israel's Scriptures and God's self-revelation.
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Read the Passage: John 1:1–5

Notice repeated words:

- beginning
 - Word
 - God
 - life
 - light
 - darkness
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Immediate Literary Context

John 1:1–18 is often called the Prologue to John's Gospel. It introduces nearly every major theme developed later:

- life
- light
- darkness
- glory
- grace
- truth
- belief
- witness

- becoming God's children
- seeing God through Jesus

Almost every major idea in the Gospel appears here first.

Old Testament Background

Genesis 1

- John intentionally echoes Genesis.
 - Genesis begins: "In the beginning God created..."
 - John begins: "In the beginning was the Word..."
- John is announcing that Jesus is present before Genesis begins.

Psalm 33

- "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made..."
- Creation happened through God's spoken word.
- John reveals that this Word is personal.

Isaiah 55

- God's word goes forth.
- It accomplishes God's purposes. It never fails.
- John reveals that God's Word ultimately came in person.

Proverbs 8

- Wisdom is poetically portrayed as being present with God during creation, delighting in His work. John uses creation language that recalls this passage, while presenting Jesus not merely as personified wisdom but as the eternal Son through whom creation came into being (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15–17).

Genesis 1 and John 1

John deliberately invites readers to compare these two openings.

Genesis 1	John 1
In the beginning	In the beginning
God	The Word was with God
Creation begins	Creation explained
God speaks	Jesus is the Word
Let there be light	Jesus is the Light
Darkness	Darkness
Life begins	Jesus is Life
Creation starts	New creation begins

- John is presenting Jesus as the beginning of God's new creation.
- Just as Genesis begins physical creation, John's Gospel begins spiritual recreation.

Key words

"Beginning"

Greek: ἀρχή *archē*

Not merely "the start." It points to the origin of everything:

- Before time.
- Before creation.
- Jesus already existed.

"Word"

Greek: λόγος *logos*

John's meaning comes primarily from the Old Testament. Throughout Scripture God's Word:

- creates
- reveals
- commands
- judges
- saves

- keeps covenant

Jesus embodies all these functions because He is God's fullest self-revelation. Hebrews 1:1–3 explains that God has now spoken definitively through His Son.

"With God"

Greek: πρὸς τὸν θεόν *pros ton theon*

- Suggests close personal relationship.
- Face-to-face fellowship.
- Jesus is distinct from the Father. Yet eternally united with Him.

"Was God"

- John carefully balances two truths:
 - The Word is not identical to the Father.
 - The Word fully shares God's divine nature.
- John avoids both confusing the Father and Son into one person and separating them into two gods.

"Life"

Greek: ζωὴ *zōē*

- Not merely biological life.
- The life that comes from God.
- The eternal quality of life shared with Him.

"Light"

Throughout Scripture light represents:

- God's presence
- truth
- holiness
- guidance
- salvation

Jesus becomes the ultimate Light.

Jesus as the "Word of the LORD"

In the Old Testament, "the word of the LORD" is far more than spoken information. It is God's active self-expression. Consider these examples:

Creation

- Genesis 1: "God said..."
- Psalm 33:6–9

Revelation

- Jeremiah 1:4
- Ezekiel 1:3

Deliverance

- Isaiah 55:10–11

Judgment

- Amos 3:1

John gathers these themes and presents Jesus as God's ultimate Word—not merely a messenger bringing God's message, but the One in whom God's message is perfectly revealed (John 1:14, 18).

Jesus and Old Testament Wisdom

Several Old Testament passages describe Wisdom as God's companion in creation, especially Proverbs 8. Wisdom is portrayed as:

- present before creation
- delighting in God's works
- calling people to life
- offering truth instead of folly

John uses many of these themes but goes beyond poetic personification.

Jesus is not simply another illustration of wisdom.

Rather, He perfectly embodies God's wisdom.

Paul writes:

- 1 Corinthians 1:24 — Christ is "the wisdom of God."
- Colossians 2:3 — in Him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

The chiasmus of John 1

John's prologue is carefully arranged.

One literary feature many scholars observe is a chiasmus (from the Greek letter *kai/chi*, X). It's a literary pattern in which ideas are arranged like a mirror:

A
 B
 C
 D
 C'
 B'
 A'

The outer ideas correspond to one another, leading readers toward the center.

Ancient Jewish writers frequently used this structure to emphasize the main point.

Examples appear throughout Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, and the teachings of Jesus.

A simplified chiasm of John 1:1–18

A — John 1:1–2: The Word's eternal relationship with God

B — John 1:3–5: Creation, life, light and darkness

C — John 1:6–7: John sent to bear witness

D — John 1:8–9: John is not the Light; the true Light comes

E — John 1:10–11: The Word comes into the world but is not received

E' — John 1:12–13: Those who receive Him become God's children

D' — John 1:14: The Word comes in the flesh, and His glory is seen

C' — John 1:15: John bears witness again

B' — John 1:16–17: Grace received through Jesus Christ

A' — John 1:18: The Son's relationship with God and revelation of God

Many scholars differ somewhat on the precise boundaries of the chiasm. However, a common observation is that the theological and literary movement centers on the human response to the incarnate Word: receiving Him and becoming children of God (vv. 12–13). Everything before this prepares for that invitation, and everything after it explains how Jesus makes it possible.

Parallel passages

Genesis 1

- God speaks. Creation happens.
- John reveals who that divine Word is.

Psalms 33

- Creation comes through God's Word.
- John identifies Jesus as that eternal Word.

Hebrews 1

- The Son created all things.
- The Son sustains all things.
- The Son perfectly reveals God.

Colossians 1

- Everything exists through Christ.
- Everything continues through Christ.
- Everything ultimately belongs to Christ.

Revelation 21

- Genesis begins with light. Gospel of John begins with light.
- Revelation ends with eternal light.
- The Bible forms one continuous story: Creation → Fall → Redemption → New Creation.

Main truths

- Jesus existed before creation. He is eternal.
- Jesus reveals God perfectly. To know Jesus is to know the Father.
- Jesus is Creator. Everything owes its existence to Him.
- Jesus is God's living Word. God has spoken most fully through His Son.
- Jesus is God's Wisdom in person. He perfectly reveals God's truth and leads people into life.
- Darkness never defeats God's light. Darkness is real. But it never overcomes Christ.

Discussion

Observation

- Which words are repeated most often?
- Why does John begin before Genesis?
- What surprises you most about these five verses?

Understanding

- Why is Jesus called "the Word" instead of simply "the Son" here?
- What similarities do you see between Genesis 1 and John 1?
- Why does John emphasize light and darkness?

Digging Deeper

- How does Psalm 33 prepare us for John 1?
- In what ways does Jesus fulfill the role of God's Word throughout the Old Testament?
- How does Jesus both fulfill and surpass the Old Testament portrayal of Wisdom?

Application

- Where do you most need God's light today?
- What darkness seems strongest in your life?
- How does knowing Jesus existed before creation change the way you view Him?
- How can remembering that Christ is Creator bring confidence during uncertain times?
- What does it mean practically to build your life on the eternal Word rather than on changing circumstances?

Prayer focus

- Praise Jesus as the eternal Creator and Word of God.
- Thank Him for bringing light into a dark world.
- Ask Him to reveal Himself more clearly through His Word.
- Pray for courage to walk in His light even when life feels uncertain.

Looking ahead

Next session: John 1:6–13 — "Can I Become Part of God's Family?" John introduces John the Baptist's witness and explains that while many rejected the true Light, those who receive and trust Him are given the astonishing privilege of becoming children of God.