

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 1:1-5 | LIFE AND LIGHT FOR RESTLESS HEARTS

KEY TERMS

John - While the Gospel of John itself does not identify an author, the internal evidence and Early Church history affirms the apostle John as the author. 1, 2, 3 John and Revelation are also attributed to the apostle John.

Word - John opens his gospel calling Jesus the *Word* (Greek *logos*). The term *logos* was widely used in Greek philosophy—most commonly to refer to a “principle behind the universe”—and in the Old Testament—connected to God’s creation (e.g. Gen 1:3-27) and revelation (e.g. Jer 1:3). John likely uses the term to catch the attention of both Jewish and Gentile readers, and to highlight Jesus as God’s ultimate revelation.

Light/darkness - John alludes to Genesis 1 throughout his introduction with terms like *beginning*, *word*, *made*, *light*, and *darkness*. Verse 5 (*the light shines in the darkness*) is especially significant because John is alluding to creation—where God brought literal light into darkness—while foreshadowing the story he is about to tell—where Jesus brings spiritual light into darkness.

SYNOPSIS

The gospel of John was written in the late 1st century by the apostle John. The gospel of John differs from Matthew, Mark, and Luke in that John is less concerned with giving a chronological narrative of Jesus’ life and is more concerned with making a theological case for who Jesus is (and isn’t!). This is seen from the opening of the gospel as John writes, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (v. 1). John later identifies the *Word* as Jesus (v. 1:14)—the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God—and verse one explains that this Son of God has existed with God the Father from the beginning and is in fact God himself, yet is distinct from the Father. As John continues in verses 3-4, he explains that the Son of God was not just present at creation, but was in fact an active agent in creating all things. John then attributes *life* and *light* to Jesus, which were both common religious symbols (v. 4). Jesus himself applies both of these terms to himself later in the gospel (see John 8:12, 9:5, 11:25, & 14:6). John ends this section saying, *The light (Jesus) shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it* (v. 5). Verses 1-5 are part of what is commonly referred to as the “Prologue” to John because the opening section provides an introduction before jumping into the narrative.

GOING DEEPER

Skim over Matthew 1 and read Luke 1:34-38. How is both Jesus’ divine nature and human nature on display in the opening of these gospels? What does it mean to you to have a Savior who is both fully God and fully human?

DID YOU KNOW?

John connects his gospel to creation in John 1 and he also writes about the new creation in the book of Revelation. In John 1:5 he announces Jesus *the light [who] shines in the darkness* and in Revelation 22 he records a picture of a future without *lamp or sun* because God is our *light*.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 1:1-5. What's the big idea? What key words or phrases jump out at you?
2. Read Genesis 1:1-5. What words or concepts from these verses are repeated in John 1:1-5?
3. What do you think John is trying to help us see by linking John 1 and Genesis 1? What can we learn about Jesus from these connections?
4. Now read John 1:14. What does this verse teach about Jesus? What is mind-blowing for us to comprehend when we put together the teaching of verses 1-5 and verse 14?
5. In John 20:30-31, what purpose does John give for writing this book? How do these two verses inform our understanding of what John says about Jesus in John 1:1-5?

LIVING THE WORD

6. In our world, what are some common approaches to finding truth or meaning in life? How are these inadequate for forming a trustworthy rationale and authority for our lives?
7. Why is Jesus a better and truer rationale and authority for our lives? According to John, why can we trust Jesus (see John 1:1-5, 12-14; 3:16, 20:30-31)?
8. What does it look like to trust or count on Jesus to be your light and life? Is Jesus the one who gives you meaning and direction?
9. What are you looking forward to learning as we begin our study of The Gospel of John?