

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 1:14-18 | THE MOST MARVELOUS THING YOU WILL EVER SEE

KEY TERMS

Glory - In the OT, the word *glory* is used to convey God's intrinsic goodness and holiness, often connected with his presence—and thus a display of his goodness and holiness—with his people (see Ex 24:16 & 1 Kgs 8:10-11). John seems to use the term to say that Jesus' incarnation is the ultimate display of God's goodness and holiness.

Grace and truth - *Grace* is often used in Scripture to describe what God does for undeserving people. By describing Jesus as *full of grace and truth*, John is highlighting Jesus as the ultimate expression of God giving to the underserving—He gives *himself*. *Grace* is accompanied by *truth* showing that the two work together.

SYNOPSIS

As John concludes his prologue, he says *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* (v. 14). This is probably the clearest statement anywhere in the NT concerning the doctrine of the incarnation—that God came into the world as a human being. The centrality of this truth to Christianity cannot be understated and John talked about it in a variety of ways: as light coming into the world (Jn 3:19), Jesus coming down from heaven (Jn 6:38), the Son coming from the Father into the world (Jn 16:28), and more. This is also the first time John's gospel links *the Word* with Jesus which is important because it makes clear that by *the Word*, John is not referring to an abstract principle behind the universe (like other philosophies might suggest) but to a person—namely Jesus, the Son of God and second person of the trinity. In the second half of verse 14, John wants his audience to know that when they see Jesus, they are seeing God himself.

Verses 16-17 are hard both to translate and interpret. Verse 16, *For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace*, seems to be a way of saying that in Jesus—the one full of grace and truth—a bottomless supply of grace is available to God's people. John then makes a contrast between Moses/the Law and Jesus in verse 17 writing, *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*. At first glance, this verse could suggest that the law did not contain grace or truth, and now grace and truth are available in Jesus, but this would contrast what Jesus says about the usefulness of the Law later in John's gospel (see John 5:46). Instead, John seems to be contrasting Moses/the Law as an inferior and temporary display of grace and truth compared to Jesus as a full and eternal expression of grace and truth.

GOING DEEPER

Read Colossians 1:15-20. How does the description in Colossians deepen our understanding of John 1:14-18? Knowing that Jesus is the revelation of God the Son in human flesh, how does this affect your view of the Father?

DID YOU KNOW?

The word *dwelt* in verse 14 literally means "to pitch a tent or tabernacle." John is alluding to the OT tabernacle, which was filled by God's glory and was the place God's *dwelled* amongst his people. John wants his readers to see that God's glory and presence are fully on display in Jesus.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 1:14-18. Make 4-5 quick observations on these verses? What stands out to you?
2. In these verses, John focuses on the Son of God's coming into the world as a human being: *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*. Why does this reality make Jesus entirely unique among the world's religious leaders and movements?
3. Several references are made to some aspect of sight or seeing in these verses. What point do you think is John making with this emphasis? What is so important about our "seeing"?
4. Read Exodus 33:7-11 and 17-23, which provide the background to much of what John is saying. How is Jesus' coming to earth as a person a greater and fuller revelation of God's glory than what Moses experienced?

LIVING THE WORD

5. How does the combination of the *full divinity of Christ* (the fact that he is eternally God who made us) and *full humanity of Christ* (the fact that he became one of us and walked in our world) offer us both confidence and comfort in our day-to-day life?
6. How is Christ's coming into the world an undeniable proof of God's love for us? See also John 3:16.
7. As you reflect on this lesson, what is one truth that is personally meaningful to you? How does this help you experience "grace upon grace" from the fullness of Jesus this week?

Practice to consider: The next time you take communion, reflect upon about the fact that Jesus is *the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us*. When we share the Lord's table, we break bread to remind ourselves of his flesh that was broken and torn for us, and we take a cup to remind ourselves of the blood of his humanity that was poured out for us. A deeper understanding of the incarnation provides a deeper experience of the communion table.