

BIBLE BACKGROUND

JOURNEY 2: “How Can Words Have Skin?”

Jesus: The Word Became Flesh

KEY PASSAGE:

John 1

KEY WORD:

The Real Thing

KEY VERSE:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.”
—John 1:14

KEY THOUGHT:

The only real Jesus others may see is ME!

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED

The author of the Gospel of John often used this phrase to describe himself (John 13:23). He was one of the three disciples who formed the Lord’s inner circle—Peter, James and John. James and John were brothers and lived near the Sea of Galilee, where they worked in their father’s fishing business.

John was probably a young man in his late 20s when Christ called him to be one of His followers. After Christ returned to heaven, John became a strong leader in the church in Jerusalem until he was exiled to the island of Patmos under the Roman emperor Domitian. It was there on Patmos that John received God’s revelation of the end of the age. Having been released from the island, he returned to Ephesus, where he wrote the last book of the New Testament. He was the last of the original 12 apostles to die, at the end of the first century. Both Peter and Paul had died 25–30 years earlier.⁴

DIFFERENT PORTRAITS OF CHRIST

Each of the Gospel writers was led by the Holy Spirit to paint a different picture of Jesus.

⁴ *What the Bible Is All About* by Dr. Henrietta C. Mears, Regal Books, 1998, pp. 419–420.

- Matthew presents Christ as a King who legally had inherited the throne of David through the line of Joseph (1:1–17). He was writing to the Jews to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-expected Messiah. In the first 17 verses of chapter 1, Matthew presents His royal genealogy and His covenant position as the Son of Abraham.
- Mark, on the other hand, was writing to a Gentile group of readers, mainly the Romans, who knew nothing about Old Testament prophecy. No genealogy is given here because Jesus is portrayed as a *servant*. No one is particularly interested in a servant’s line of ancestry. This book focuses on what Jesus did for others. In Mark, Jesus is seen working right beside His disciples (16:20).
- Luke wrote for a Greek audience who would have been drawn to the beauty and songs of praise related to the coming of Christ. His portrait of Jesus is that of a perfect man. Luke traces the line of Christ through Mary back to Adam (3:23–38).

JOHN’S PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

John’s account of the life of Christ is his attempt to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (20:31). The word *believe* is found 98 times in the pages of his Gospel. John wanted his readers to believe that the baby from Bethlehem was one with God the Father.

It is interesting to note what appears in the other three Gospels that does not appear in John:

- Genealogies
- Accounts of His birth
- Appointment of disciples
- Parables
- Transfigurations
- Descriptions of ascension
- Great Commission

What John reveals that the others do not is designed to convince the reader that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

- The Creator (1:3)
- The only begotten of the Father (1:14)
- The Lamb of God (1:29)

- His Connection with the great I AM of Exodus 3:14 (6:35; 8:12; 8:58; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1)

THE POWERFUL PROLOGUE

John’s Gospel contains no birth narrative. Instead, he opens his book like Moses opened his in Genesis 1: “In the beginning . . .” He affirms the existence of Christ before His incarnation. Jesus had no beginning. He always was and He always will be. He was not created; He was the Creator because He and the Father are one (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2). God used His own words to speak the world and everything in it into existence. Christ is that Word, the pre-existent, eternal agent of creation as described in John 1:3–4.

Jesus is called the Word because in His physical form He came to declare who God was and what His power, wisdom, and salvation looked like. Just as our words express thoughts, emotions and ideas, so the physical presence of Christ declared, revealed, and demonstrated what God is like. God’s Word literally became flesh and took up residence on earth.

- Jesus became what He previously was not—a human being. He willingly gave up His heavenly glory and status to take on the form of a man.
- He willingly humbled Himself before the Father and submitted to a horrific physical death on a Cross.
- He represented that perfect Lamb who could be used to atone for the sins of mankind.
- He gave up His right to be treated with respect and honor and allowed Himself to be persecuted and humiliated by crucifixion, the cruelest and most degrading form of death a man could experience.
- The Word of God was literally nailed to a tree to suffer and die in order that all men might find salvation through His death.

THE WORD LITERALLY BECAME FLESH

In His incarnation, Christ did not cease to be God but took on a human form of God. The glory of God literally resided within His physical body, like the Shekinah glory of God was contained in the tabernacle of the Old Testament.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” —John 1:14

- The Infinite took on a finite body.
- The Eternal One allowed Himself to be restrained by time.
- The Invisible became visible.
- The Supernatural was reduced to a natural, physical dimension.

The disciples saw glimpses of His glory as they learned who He really was.

- They saw His miraculous transfiguration beside Elijah and Moses.
- They witnessed His supernatural power over life and death, natural forces, and disease and physical decay.
- They listened to His wisdom and they came to understand what truth was all about.
- They saw the very character of God acted out in His mercy, longsuffering and abounding grace.

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

Every chapter of John's Gospel declares that Jesus is God's Son.⁵

- **Chapter 1:** Nathanael's confession: "You are the Son of God." (1:49)
- **Chapter 2:** The wedding at Cana: His glory revealed. (2:11)
- **Chapter 3:** The only Son of the Father (3:16).
- **Chapter 4:** "I who speak to you am He." (4:26)
- **Chapter 5:** "The dead will hear the voice of God" (5:25).
- **Chapter 6:** "I am the bread of life." (6:35)
- **Chapter 7:** "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (7:38)
- **Chapter 8:** "Before Abraham was, I am!" (8:58)
- **Chapter 9:** "It is he who is speaking to you." (9:37)
- **Chapter 10:** "I and the Father are One." (10:30)
- **Chapter 11:** Martha's declaration: "You are the Christ, the Son of God." (11:27)
- **Chapter 12:** "And I, when I am lifted from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (12:32)
- **Chapter 13:** "You call me Teacher and you are right, for so I am." (13:13)
- **Chapter 14:** "Believe in God; believe also in Me." (14:1)
- **Chapter 15:** "For apart from Me you can do nothing." (15:5)
- **Chapter 16:** I will send the Holy Spirit to you. (16:7)
- **Chapter 17:** Christ's prayer asking the Father to glorify His Son (17:1)
- **Chapter 18:** "You say that I am king." (18:37)

- **Chapter 19:** His last words: "It is finished." (19:30)
- **Chapter 20:** Doubting Thomas: "My Lord and my God!" (20:28)
- **Chapter 21:** His demand for obedience: "You follow me." (21:22)

GETTING REAL

John concluded his Gospel with these words:

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

—John 20:30–31

The Word had in fact become REAL! The challenge for us as believers is to make sure that others see the real Jesus living in us.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 421–422.

TEACHING PLAN

JOURNEY 2: "How Can Words Have Skin?"

Jesus: The Word Became Flesh

KEY PASSAGE: John 1	KEY WORD: The Real Thing
KEY THOUGHT: The only real Jesus others may see is ME!	KEY VERSE: <i>"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." —John 1:14</i>



INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

CONNECT the Big Room experience with the Bible story by asking the students questions about what they saw.

- a. "How was the concept of 'The Real Thing' presented in the Big Room today?"
- b. "Who didn't seem to get what everyone was talking about?"
- c. "When it really comes down to it, what is the most important *real thing* in your life?"

REAL OR FAKE?

SHOW different types of things to represent the concepts of *real* and *fake*. For example, you could use any of the following:

- Real flowers/leaves vs. fake flowers/leaves
- Real fruit vs. fake fruit
- Genuine gold jewelry vs. simulated gold jewelry
- Real diamonds vs. cubic zirconium

TALK about how easy/difficult it is sometimes to know the difference

between what is real and what is fake. People who lived in biblical times had the same problem. Some people thought John the Baptist was the Messiah. Others said that Jesus couldn't possibly be the Messiah because they had known Him as a boy growing up in Nazareth. How could anybody be sure they would recognize the Messiah when He came along? Our study today will provide these answers.



TABLE TALK 1: Knowing The Truth

SAY: "As truth seekers, there's only one place we can be sure of discovering the truth every single time." [*Hold up a Bible as you explain that it is inerrant, infallible, without mistake and totally reliable because God wrote it and it is impossible for God to lie. It is not part of His character.*] **ASK** the students if they have ever lied. How did they feel? What is lying? (*sin*) Can God ever sin? (*No, He is perfect and so is His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.*) Therefore, what can we be sure of when we read God's Word? (*That it is 100 percent true!*)



EXPLORING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Explain how the Bible helps us to understand who Jesus is. Have the students turn to Genesis 1 and John 1 in their Bibles.

- A.** How did God create the world? Look at Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 14 (*He spoke the words and the world came into being.*) Those words had to contain some kind of power in order to make a whole universe appear.
- B.** Was God all by Himself when He made the world? Look at Genesis 1:26 and Colossians 1:15–17. Who was with Him? (*Jesus*) What does Jesus do for all of Creation? (*holds it together*)
- C.** Who then is John talking about in John 1:1 when he speaks about the Word being with God from the beginning? Who was the Word? (*Jesus*)
- D.** What eventually happened to this Word that was with God and was God? Read John 1:14. (*Jesus took on a human form and came to earth to live among us.*) What is another name for Jesus that means "God with us"? (*Immanuel*) This is also a name for the Messiah who was expected to come and make everything right in the world.

- E.** What did Jesus in human form represent to the world? Read John 1:4–5. (*a light that shines in the darkness*)



TABLE TALK 2: God in Human Form

Have the students gather with their TGLs to do a simple art project. This will help them understand the concept of the Word becoming flesh. Give each student a blank piece of paper. Tell them to draw the outline of a body and to label their picture "Jesus—God with us." Inside the body they are to write words that describe who Jesus is and what He is like. To help the younger children, write these words on the board or on signs you place on their tables.

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------|----------------|
| • Creator | • Human | • Truth |
| • Immanuel | • Body | • Supernatural |
| • Eternal | • Miracle-Maker | • All-Powerful |
| • Visible | • Glory | • All-Knowing |

Share with the older students some of the information from the Bible Background about the Word being made flesh. **EXPLAIN** how the physical body of the child in the manger contained all the things written inside the outline of the body. This included a beating heart, lungs that took in oxygen and gave off carbon dioxide, miles of blood vessels, and a brain capable of knowing everything in the past as well as everything in the future. He was fully God and fully human at the same time.

WHY JESUS CAME

READ John 1:12 and **ASK** why God had to send Jesus to earth in human form.

- To show us how a child of God was supposed to act, to think, to speak, and to live
- To take the punishment for the sins we have committed
- To make a way for us to stand in the presence of God forgiven of our sins
- To insure eternal life to all who receive Christ as Savior
- To fulfill the prophecies about Messiah's first coming and the promise of redemption, i.e. *the scarlet thread* described in the pages of the Old Testament



THE CROSSROADS

DRAW a picture of a manger on the board with a cross over it. **SAY:** “The Bible says there is only one way people can be forgiven of their sins and find eternal life.” **ASK** the students to share some other ways people think they can go to heaven (*good works, going to church, born to Christian parents*). **TELL** the students you know the real way to get to heaven. There is only one way, and it is a sure thing. **SHARE** the plan of salvation and explain how we each can know the truth about how to go to heaven. **INVITE** the students to make that decision today. Be available to speak privately with any student who has questions.



TABLE TALK 3: *The Word Returns to Heaven*

HAVE the students gather in their table groups and discuss the following ideas. After Jesus returned to heaven, who was left to represent Him on earth and to show the world how much God loves every person? (*the disciples and those they led to Christ*) **HAVE** the students answer the following questions.

- How successful were the disciples?
- How do you know?
- How did you hear about Jesus?
- How do you point others to Jesus?
- Can others see Jesus in you? How?



BIBLE STUDY SKILLS

READ the different ways Jesus is described in the Gospel accounts as outlined in the Bible Background material. **SHARE** this information with the students using these key words for each book. (*You may want to refer to the CD Book by Book produced by Walk Thru the Bible Ministries. Colorful cartoon pictures convey the main idea in each book of the Bible.*)

- Matthew – King
- Mark – Servant
- Luke – Perfect Man
- John – God Himself

HAVE the students practice locating these four books in the Bible using any type of Bible Drill format. Make sure every student knows where these books are located and the keyword in each one that describes Jesus.



TABLE TALK 4: *Jesus—Chapter by Chapter* (Optional: Grades 4, 5 and 6)

This activity will be challenging for the older students. Refer to the section in the Bible Background material called “Chapter by Chapter.” **ASK** the students to open their Bibles to the book of John. Beginning with chapter 1, point out the verse in each chapter that clearly says: Jesus is God’s Son. Let them take turns reading the verses aloud. Be sure to explain what each verse means. If the students are using their own Bibles, tell them to underline the verse and write in the margin:

Jesus = God



SCRIPTURE MEMORY: *John 1:14*

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.”

- Divide the verse into three sections that can be easily remembered.
- Designate a set of motions for each section.
Section 1: Cup hands to indicate the “Word.” Rub hands across forearms to communicate “flesh.”
Section 2: Place hands around the eyes and look up.
Section 3: Form a cross with forearms as a sign of what Jesus did for each of us.
- Allow the students to practice the verse along with the motions in groups of two or three.
- Repeat the verse three to five times with the entire group.
- Explain that Jesus was fully God and fully man all at the same time.
- Reward in some small way those who can say the entire verse from memory.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain why we can trust the Bible to be true. (*the prophecies that have been accurately fulfilled; God's truthfulness; the Bible's own words*)
2. How did God create the moon and stars? (*by the power of His word*)
3. How did He create the birds of the air and the animals on land and in the ocean? (*with His word*)
4. Who was with God at the time of creation? (*Jesus and the Holy Spirit*)
5. Who holds the creation together? (*Jesus – Colossians 1:15*)
6. What does it mean to say "the Word became flesh"? (*Jesus was born into this world as a human being.*)
7. What does the word *Immanuel* mean? (*"God with us"*)
8. Why did Jesus come? (*to seek and to save the lost*)
9. How is Jesus presented to the Jewish readers in Matthew? (*as the rightful king to sit on David's throne*)
10. How is He portrayed in the book of Mark? (*as a servant*)
11. What picture of Jesus does Luke paint of Jesus? (*the perfect man*)
12. What does John want us to know about Jesus? (*He is God's only Son.*)

JOURNEY 3:

"Who's Your Daddy?"

Jesus: Son of Abraham, Son of David, Son of God

