

connect360

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE

Come and See

ENCOUNTERING JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

A STUDY OF JOHN

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**GC2
PRESS**

Dallas, Texas

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Come and See

Encountering Jesus in the Gospel of John

A Study of John

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FOCAL TEXT

John 1:19–34

BACKGROUND

**Isaiah 40:1–11;
Malachi 3:1; John 1:1–18**

lesson 1

Come and See: The Lamb of God

MAIN IDEA

John the Baptist bears witness that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

How does recognizing Jesus as the Lamb of God reshape my understanding of sin and salvation?

TEACHING AIM

To help participants understand that John's mission was to identify Jesus publicly as the promised Messiah and sacrificial Savior



Bible Comments

Understanding the Context

The Gospel of John opens with a grand description of the preincarnate Christ as revealed in John 1:1–5—Jesus has always been with God; He was at creation, creating, though He would walk with humanity; He is fully human and fully God. As Philippians 2:6–7 states, Jesus willfully limited Himself to walk with us. The Gospels tell this story of Jesus’ work through the interactions He had with various individuals. Each conversation moved toward redemption, revealing more of the character of Christ that will be fulfilled at the Cross. John 1:4 calls Jesus our light. John 1:9 says Jesus enlightens every person. John 1:14 says Jesus dwelt among us. These three introductory verses foreshadow that the power of Jesus is most readily seen in the personal connections Jesus had with individuals along the way. Jesus can turn water into wine, but that act is not nearly as critical as the meaningful relationships the act helped cultivate.

The Gospels highlight these revealing personal encounters, beginning with John the Baptist. Jesus’ power is revealed as these relationships deepen through the text. John the Baptist was tied to Jesus Christ from birth. He was in a unique position to speak first about Jesus. The two were related and born about the same time (Luke 1:36). God prepared John the Baptist through a familial relationship to speak about Jesus before anyone else even noticed Jesus’s presence in John’s gospel.

John the Baptist became the primary witness in John 1, validating the Gospel’s preamble focusing on Christ. The wisdom that John the Baptist had is relational, but it is also spiritual. John the Baptist’s mother, Elizabeth, had a direct connection to the Spirit in pregnancy, causing the infant to leap (Luke 1:41). John the Baptist also had a clear understanding of the Spirit in John 1:32–34, recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit on Jesus. When John spoke, it was more than as a cousin promoting a family member. Rather, it was one who had wisdom from the Spirit of God.

Interpreting the Scriptures

Identity in Jesus Christ (1:19–23)

1:19. The introduction of John the Baptist is tense. The highest religious authorities in Jerusalem were concerned about his rising fame and intentions. Their fear compelled them to send inquisitors to confront him. Their first question, “Who are you?” is loaded with anxiety and danger. It was a question about his identity, agenda, and potential threat levels. They feared these wilderness baptisms were disrupting the established religious order. These inquisitors wanted to hear how John the Baptist identified himself in that established religious order.

1:20–21. John the Baptist sensed the motive behind their question. He did not tell them who he was. Rather, he stated that he was not the Christ in a threefold denial to punctuate the point. The messianic role was one category of identity they were asking about. But they pressed him further about another category of identity, as to whether he was claiming to be Elijah, the prophet. Their mission was to narrow the work of John the Baptist into a specific category they could make sense of. Elijah was an expectation from Malachi 4:5. John the Baptist denied this, though Jesus claimed that John the Baptist was an Elijah figure in Matthew 11:14. They then confronted him further with the category of generic prophet, an expectation from Deuteronomy 18:18. John the Baptist denied their categories of ministry identity. These were biblical identities the inquisitors were asking about. However, their questions were narrowed toward accusation as if John the Baptist were on trial for claiming a role he was not qualified for. As the inquisitors asked John the Baptist about his agenda, they revealed their own.

1:22–23. Finally, the inquisitors asked John the Baptist how he described himself. He pointed them to Jesus through Isaiah. Their previous questions alluded to Scripture; John the Baptist pointed to Isaiah 40:3. His identity is of Scripture, but not how they imagined. John the Baptist was not the Christ,

but he was connected to the Christ. His specific role was to be the first person to say, “Come and see Jesus.” His identity prepared the way for Jesus and helped others prepare themselves for Jesus. John the Baptist had not yet said Jesus’ name in the text, but this was all preparation for His immediate arrival on the scene in the Gospel. Before the religious authorities were aware of Jesus’ presence, John the Baptist was aware. He answered their accusations by telling them to come and see Jesus Christ.

Work in Jesus Christ (1:24–28)

1:24–25. The inquisitors had ulterior motives in their questions for John the Baptist. They were coming from the Pharisees to determine what his motives were, and if he was a threat to the Pharisees’ positions of religious authority. They would not settle for who, as they asked before, but pushed the interrogation forward to understand why John the Baptist acted as he did. They assumed that John the Baptist baptized for a particular agenda, but they were confused about what that agenda might be. Baptism was a part of religious life, but John the Baptist’s actions were different. For the inquisitors, baptism was for proselytes, Gentile converts into Judaism. John the Baptist’s act resembled more of a ritual cleansing in preparation for the Christ which specifically included baptizing Jewish people whom the religious authorities would not have baptized. Cleansing rituals found in 2 Chronicles 4:6 and Exodus 30:18 each described a basin as a sea where priests would wash in preparation to serve in the Temple. The inquisitors were uncertain of John’s actions. Were baptisms for new converts? Were they ceremonially washing? In either circumstance, John the Baptist was at fault. They could not see a way that his baptisms would fit into their present religious system.

1:26–27. John did not answer the question they asked. Instead, he pointed them again to Jesus. He drew their attention to Jesus’ presence. They and the reader of the Gospel were unaware that the incarnate Christ was present in the text. John the Baptist and the water he baptized with are ineffectual without Jesus Christ. John the Baptist said that the only way he came first

was in the sense that he was a slave preparing for a master's arrival. He is trivial in comparison to what was coming after him.

1:28. John the Baptist claimed to be a humble servant but carried unthinkable fame. That is why the inquisitors came in the first place. Mark 1:5 says that John the Baptist had a direct impact on everyone in the region. People from all over came to see him, hear him, and be baptized by him. All of Judea and all of Jerusalem hurried to the Jordan River to be near John the Baptist. This was a monumental shift in the communities that the Pharisees, the priests, and the Levites could not ignore. This flurry of fame required an assessment of what was happening in their communities through John the Baptist.

The Person of Jesus Christ (1:29–34)

1:29. John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the crowds as a lamb. This is what the people needed most. In Matthew 3:6–8, he preached a baptism that required those to be baptized to first repent of their sins. The crowd needed the overwhelming weight of guilt removed from their lives. However, John knew the waters of the Jordan River were not the cleansing power that people needed. In John the Baptist's preaching, they began to understand their need for the removal of their guilt. But all the water that has ever run through the Jordan River would not remove their guilt. Where the river was ineffectual, Jesus was powerful. This is why John the Baptist began with the image of a lamb. Multiple Old Testament texts point to the sacrifice of lambs: Genesis 22:7; Exodus 12:3; 29:38; Leviticus 5:6; and Isaiah 53:7. If John the Baptist had a specific instance of these in mind, it is unclear. However, we can be certain John the Baptist preached that where animal sacrifice and running water fall short, Jesus is proven effective. Sin is the primary problem that humanity faces. And now, the incarnate Christ has appeared to take away sin's guilt that destroys life.

1:30–31. The humility of John the Baptist is clear. He had a significant ministry. He was on the scene prior to the incarnate Christ. Those present knew

John the Baptist before they met Jesus. However, that did not make John the Baptist primary. John the Baptist made three statements of his humility in reference to Jesus: “has a higher rank,” “existed before me,” and “I did not recognize Him.” These all clarified that John the Baptist served Jesus Christ, and not the other way around. If the crowd wanted to know John’s agenda as the inquisitors did, he elevated Jesus and pointed to His work to provide forgiveness to people who desperately needed it. John identified himself wholly in relationship to Jesus’ ministry.

1:32–34. Three times John the Baptist mentioned the Holy Spirit here. The Spirit of God was with Jesus and remained with Jesus. This connected the work that Jesus would do directly to God the Father so no one else could take credit. John the Baptist’s work was temporal/physical. It could be recreated by other people. However, Jesus’ work is eternal/spiritual. It could only be accomplished of the power of the Spirit of God.

Focusing on the Meaning

John the Baptist was asked two questions that we are often asked: “Who are you?” and “What do you say about yourself?” These questions were asked of John the Baptist in an accusatory fashion. But more generically, how often are you asked to introduce yourself? When was the last time you had to give your name and background? When John the Baptist was asked, he went straight to Jesus Christ. His role, his title, and his agenda were directly linked to Jesus. Could we do the same? As we consider our identity, we must get to Jesus Christ. As a Christian, our connection to Jesus is primary to our identity. The same is true of our agendas. If we believe in Jesus as our Savior, His direction alone shapes the priorities of life. John the Baptist could have defined life by connecting it to the number of people coming to be baptized, or the influence he was having on the religious community. The fact that so many came to hear him, and the religious powers sent an inquiry team to analyze his agenda was proof John the Baptist wielded great power. Yet, he

did not define himself in those terms. Instead, he told them who Jesus was and introduced Him as Savior.

John the Baptist, after introducing himself, had the opportunity to introduce the incarnate Christ in the Gospels. If Jesus were to speak in front of a large crowd, how would you introduce Him? How would you describe His work? We could use several analogies to talk about Jesus: warrior, healer, teacher, savior, redeemer, lord, shepherd, and friend. John the Baptist began with “lamb.” This got to the heart of humanity’s problem with sin and God’s specific way to remedy that problem in the person of Jesus Christ. In our walk with Jesus, we will acquire stories of His goodness. Some of those are personal, and some stories belong to others, but we will develop a way to talk about Jesus that is important to our lives. Our description of Jesus and our encounters with Him become the basis of our witness. As we go, we will introduce many to Jesus. It is critical that we do so from biblical principles and genuine personal experiences with Him.

Teaching Plans

DISCOVERY PLAN

Connect With Life

1. Prior to the session of Bible study, read through and study John 1:1–18 to get a solid background for this lesson. Using the section, “Understanding the Context,” prepare a brief presentation on the principal characters of our study today: 1) John the Baptist; 2) Jesus; and 3) the Holy Spirit.
2. Before the session, create 10 – 30” x 30” butcher paper sheets (or purchase 10 poster boards—depending on the size of your group). On five of them, write “The Old Testament prophecies concerning John the Baptist,” found in Isaiah 40:1–11. On the other five sheets, write “John the Baptist’s view of himself, based on John 1:19–27.”
3. Arrive a few minutes early to your class and set up an even number of circles with at least three or four chairs in each circle. Place a piece of butcher paper or poster board in the center of each circle, along with some colored markers. Make sure the poster boards are evenly distributed among the groups. Provide sufficient markers to write on the sheets. As people arrive, have them join one of the groups.
4. Once everyone has found a seat, have each person in the group take one minute to answer this question about themselves, “Who are you?”

Guide Bible Study

5. Ask each group to choose a spokesperson and have them look over their assigned sections and write on the butcher paper or poster boards their findings from their discussions.

6. After about 10 minutes, ask for a report from each group. Allow others to provide different opinions, as well. Summarize the material found in the section entitled, “Identity in Jesus Christ (John 1:19–23).” Say, *One of the things you will notice as you study these opening sessions is that John the Baptist always pointed away from himself and toward Jesus.*

Encourage Application

7. Tell the group you are going to ask two questions the Pharisees and Jewish leaders asked John the Baptist. Using the material under the section, “Focusing on the Meaning,” invite them to, 1) **Ponder** the questions as they relate to the biblical characters that were mentioned to participants, 2) **Allow** some to give their answers to the whole group, and then 3) have them **articulate** their thoughts and suggest some things they might do to help spread the information about John the Baptist and Jesus.
 - Question #1—“Who are you?”
 - Question #2—“What do you say about yourself?”
8. Have these letters written down the left side of the board to form an acrostic puzzle for the class: **Come and See.**

To close this session, invite all of the class to respond by writing a word or phrase by each of the letters. Encourage the class members to add additional words or phrases to each line until everyone has had the opportunity to write something to help them understand that John’s mission was to identify Jesus publicly as the promised Messiah and sacrificial Savior. Have them meditate on the fact they have just begun a study of the Gospel of John to help them in their endeavors to tell others this good news. (A copy of this assignment is available in “Teaching Resource Items” for this study at www.gc2press.org.)
9. Solicit Prayer Requests and call on someone to pray. Dismiss the group.

DISCUSSION PLAN

Connect With Life

1. Before the session, recruit four participants to portray a TV interview. You'll need one reporter and three participants to represent John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Read the lesson, the focal text (John 1:19–34), and the background texts (Isaiah 40:1–11; Malachi 3:1; John 1:1–18) and make up a list of questions for the interviewer, as well as answers for the characters. Also, if possible, provide microphones (just as a prop). Provide a copy of the “script” for the participants beforehand to help them familiarize themselves with it.
 - Ask the characters to introduce themselves by telling who they are and what they know about the other characters.
 - Ask the characters to talk about their own work.
 - Ask the characters if they are aware of any future plans for them.
2. Before the session, place the chairs as a semicircle facing the focal wall. Set four chairs in front for the “TV Interview.”

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3. Welcome your participants and invite them to take a seat. Introduce the TV Interview as if you are preparing a live audience for the show. Introduce your reporter and your three guests. Allow the interview to take place.
4. Ask some follow-up questions using the material in this *Teaching Guide*. Ask the group if they have additional questions or comments for the guests or the interviewer. Thank the reporter and the guests for their participation.
5. Debrief the interviews by asking for comments, observations, thoughts, or questions regarding what the students have heard and observed.

6. Ask a volunteer to read John 1:19–34 and ask the group if they noticed anything that was not mentioned in the interviews. If time permits, have another volunteer read Isaiah 40:1–11 and another person read Malachi 3:1, and point out things the interviews did not cover.

Encourage Application

7. Call your participants' attention to the Study Aim: To understand that John's mission was to identify Jesus publicly as the promised Messiah and sacrificial Savior.
8. Invite the members of the class to think for a moment about how what they have experienced might help them in their understanding of these three characters and how they might be able to carry on a conversation with colleagues, family members, or others with whom they come in contact. Ask for prayer concerns and call on a person to pray.

YOUTH PLAN

Connect With Life

1. This opening activity will help students think through the unique challenge that John the Baptist faced when introducing Jesus publicly.
 - Instructions
 - Have students pair up.
 - Give them one minute each to introduce themselves to each other and share important details about who they are.
 - Once the one minute is over, go around the room and have each student introduce their partner, doing their best to share who they are with the whole group.

2. Activity Discussion:
 - How did you choose what information to share with the group when introducing your partner? Were there things about them that were more important than others?
 - How does your audience affect what you choose to share about someone?
 - What makes it challenging to speak on behalf of someone else? What makes it simple?
3. Transition to the Bible study. Say, *We're going to study someone who introduced Jesus to the world. He had the unique challenge of sharing the truth of Jesus with a world who didn't know Jesus yet. Let's read about it together.*

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4. Before we begin reading the story, let's get some context. Break students into three groups and assign each group one of the following passages about John the Baptist. Have each group summarize and report back on what they read. (A copy of this assignment is available in "Youth Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)
 - Luke 1:39–45
 - Luke 1:57–66
 - Luke 1:80; Matthew 3:4–6
5. Read John 1:19–23. Ask the following questions:
 - Who were the Jewish leaders? What roles did they serve? What do you know about them?
 - What was it about John the Baptist that drew the attention of the Jewish leaders?
 - Why do you think the Jewish leaders sent the priests and Levites to ask John who he was?
 - What was John's first response to them? Why do you think that's how he answered?

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Youth Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

6. Read John 1:24–28. Ask the following questions:
 - How did John the Baptist handle fame and notoriety?
 - The religious leaders were confused about why John was baptizing people if he did not claim to be anyone important. Why was John baptizing people?
7. Read John 1:29–34. Ask the following questions:
 - How did John refer to Jesus? What do you think that means?
 - What words or phrases demonstrate John’s humility?
 - How does John experience the leading of the Holy Spirit?
8. Use the sidebar “Lamb of God” in the *Study Guide* to discuss John’s use of the phrase “The Lamb of God.”
 - How does it declare Jesus’ mission? His identity?
 - What does this phrase symbolize in Jewish tradition?

Encourage Application

9. Lead students into a time of reflection. John was asked two questions: “Who are you?” and “What do you say about yourself?”
 - When you’re in a situation where you are introducing yourself for the first time, how do you describe yourself? How did your partner introduce you during the opening activity?
 - Consider John’s answer. He went straight to Jesus—his role, title, and agenda were all directly linked to Jesus. He could have measured how many people he baptized or how large the crowds were. Instead, he rested in his identity of one preparing the way for Jesus.
 - Take a few minutes to jot down 5–10 things that make up your identity. What things shape your priorities and beliefs about yourself? (A copy of this assignment is available in “Youth Teaching Resource Items” for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

10. If Jesus were coming to speak to a crowd at your school or somewhere you are involved, how would you introduce Him? How would you describe His work?
 - Option 1: Reflective Activity—Ask students to write out a speech, introducing Jesus as the keynote speaker for their school. Have them consider what they believe would be most important to share with their peers. Then, reflect on how they can communicate that to their friends in real life.
 - Option 2: Dynamic Activity—Ask students to pretend they are introducing Jesus as the keynote speaker to their entire school. Have one or two volunteers stand and act out what they would share with their peers. Discuss what it would look like to share that with their friends in real life.
11. Take a few minutes to share any updates, praises, or prayer requests, and pray over one another.