

A

PORTRAIT

Of Jesus

Fall/Winter 2008

John 1-9



Our journey through
the gospel of John

JOHN'S UNIQUE ANGLE ON JESUS...

After reading the first verse of John, you notice it. You're reading art. John's use of metaphor, contrasts, context, and character development - he's painting a picture. A magnificent portrait of infinite detail.

John's portrait is strikingly different. He's more nuanced, more subtle. The first time studying John is akin to watching your first foreign film. It's very different but you somehow know it's good. You know it's deep. You know you like it. You're just not sure why. Our prayer is that this guide can help answer the why.

How To Use This - This guide is designed to create questions - not answers. It's got enough structure to point the way but enough wiggle room to chase those divine rabbit trails that will pop up in your Life Group. Each week is on a single sheet of paper and has 4 sections.

There are two extremes I hope we all avoid. The first one is using every single item on the guide. This is a guide, not a walkthrough. Not every thing in the guide is going to work in your Life Group.

The second extreme is using only the 'safe' options. If you've led a Life Group for a while, you can get lulled into doing only those things that are comfortable or safe. At least once a month, you should try something that you're not sure will work.

Here are the 4 sections:

Getting Started - background info on the text, cultural insights, or key words that will help you lead.

Opening Shots - lead off questions, movie clips, or statements to get your group talking.

Life Questions - questions that push deeper, focus on application.

On The Anvil - A Life Group leadership insight for the week.

JOHN 1:1-18

The Word became flesh...and dwelt among us.

What's your favorite piece of art? Why?

Opening Shots

Do you have a favorite piece of art? What is it and why?

What's your favorite story of Jesus? Why?

What gospel do you find yourself spending the most time in?

Why do you think John's take on Jesus was so different?

What questions do you hope to have answered by the end of this series?

As you look through these verses, anything stand out to you? Why?

Life Questions

John says that the Word (Jesus) was **with** God and **was** God.

What's the significance of both of those words? How are they alike? How are they different? Why are they important in describing who Jesus is?

What is so important about the **logos** becoming flesh?

John uses contrasts to show us Jesus. Which ones do we see in this passage? (light vs. darkness, nothingness vs. existence, law vs. grace, acceptance vs. rejection)

Do you see Jesus in contrasts? Which ones? Why those?

What is so polarizing about Jesus? Should he be so polarizing?

Is there a difference between Jesus being polarizing and the church being polarizing? What is it?

If Jesus is light and the **logos** why would the world reject him? What about Jesus is hard to accept?

There was (maybe even right now) a time in your life when you rejected Jesus. Why? What made following Jesus so hard?

Jesus is called the fullness of God. What does that mean? What implications does that statement have on our theology?

Beyond The Group

- Send an email out to your group having them bring their favorite piece of art. This book was probably John's favorite piece of art.

- How could your Life Group be 'the flesh of God' to your community? To each other? To the church?

- Turn off all the lights in your house and only have candles lit as you have Life Group. How valuable is light? Does this give us a deeper understanding of what is meant by Jesus being the light of the world?

Getting Started

John was steeped in Greek philosophy and this first chapter is evidence of that. His use of the phrase "logos" is not just him using the Greek word for "word." The "logos" for the Greeks was much like George

Lucas' "the Force." It was the power that gave order and meaning to the universe. It was *Ultimate Reason* that ruled the universe.

For Jews it had a special meaning as well. A Jew would never speak of God by name,

instead they would say "the word of God."

The logos then was the perfect metaphor for Jesus. He is God, He is the meaning of the universe. He was a Jew that came into a Greek world to save it.

JOHN 1:19-34

Can anything good come out of that place?

What's been the worse place you've ever visited?

Opening Shots

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Getting Started

There's an interesting situation in this passage. We have John the Baptist being confronted by "the Jews."

When we see "the Jews" in this book, it is talking about the religious elite, religious leaders.

The real bizarre question is this - what would they be doing out by the river listening to John the Baptist? The answer? Because of his dad. John (Baptist) was the son of Zacharias, the priest. The only qualification for being a priest was lineage. So whether

John liked it or not - he was considered a priest. It would have been normal for other leaders to come hear and investigate his message. This also helps us understand why Jesus was baptized by him.