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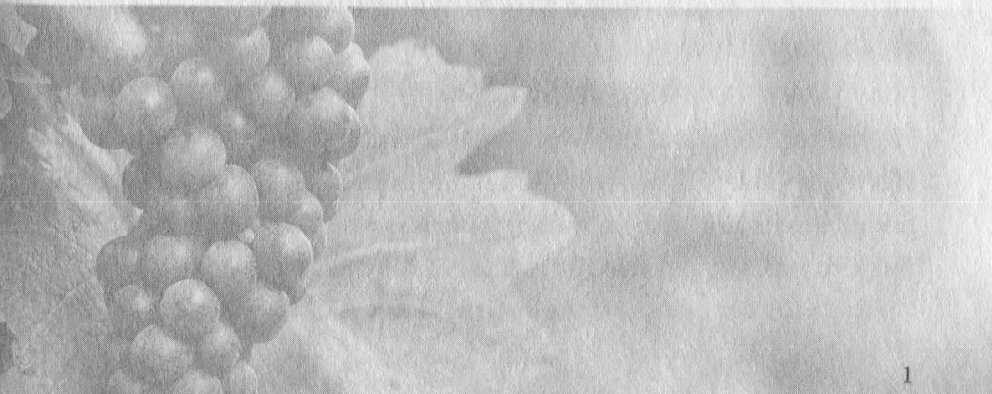
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LESSON ONE

WHEN GOD
BECAME MAN

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

JOHN 1:14



REFLECTION

Christ was born on earth by the will of God, and when we accept him as our Savior, we are also “born again” through the will of God. This our second birth—our spiritual birth into eternal life. What are some of the events surrounding your second birth in Christ?

SITUATION

The language and tone of John’s writing is quite different from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, but the subject is the same: *Jesus Christ*. The first three words of John’s Gospel echo the very first verse of the Bible: “In the beginning . . .” (Genesis 1:1). The Gospels of Matthew and Luke highlight Jesus’ human lineage, while John highlights his divine nature. From the start, John sets Jesus in the center of God’s eternal plan for the world.

OBSERVATION

Read John 1:1–18 from the New International Version or the New King James Version.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”)¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

NEW KING JAMES VERSION

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. ⁸ He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. ⁹ That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵ John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"

¹⁶ And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

EXPLORATION

1. Why do you think John begins his Gospel by stating that Jesus was with God in the very beginning—at the time of creation? What is he communicating to his readers?

2. What does this passage reveal about Jesus' mission?

3. What was John the Baptist's purpose as it relates to Jesus coming into this world?

4. Many people did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah or believe that he was God's Son. What did they miss by not receiving him?

5. John tells us that Jesus "came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (verse 14). How has this grace and truth benefitted your life?

6. What does Jesus' life as a man tell us about God as Father?

INSPIRATION

It all happened in a moment, a most remarkable moment.

As moments go, that one appeared no different than any other. If you could somehow pick it up off the timeline and examine it, it would look exactly like the ones that have passed while you have read these words. It came and it went. It was preceded and succeeded by others just like it. It was one of the countless moments that have marked time since eternity became measurable.

But in reality, that particular moment was like none other. For through that segment of time a spectacular thing occurred. God became a man. While the creatures of earth walked unaware, Divinity arrived. Heaven opened herself and placed her most precious one in a human womb.

The omnipotent, in one instant, made himself breakable. He who had been spirit became pierceable. He who was larger than the universe became an embryo. And he who sustains the world with a word chose to be dependent upon the nourishment of a young girl.

God as a fetus. Holiness sleeping in a womb. The creator of life being created.

God was given eyebrows, elbows, two kidneys, and a spleen. He stretched against the walls and floated in the amniotic fluids of his mother.

God had come near.

He came, not as a flash of light or as an unapproachable conqueror, but as one whose first cries were heard by a peasant girl and a sleepy carpenter. The hands that first held him were unmanicured, calloused, and dirty.

No silk. No ivory. No hype. No party. No hoopla.

Were it not for the shepherds, there would have been no reception. And were it not for a group of stargazers, there would have been no gifts.

Angels watched as Mary changed God's diaper. The universe watched with wonder as The Almighty learned to walk. Children played in the street with him. And had the synagogue leader in Nazareth known who was listening to his sermons . . .

For thirty-three years he would feel everything you and I have ever felt. He felt weak. He grew weary. He was afraid of failure. He was susceptible to wooing women. He got colds, burped, and had body odor. His feelings got hurt. His feet got tired. And his head ached.

To think of Jesus in such a light is—well, it seems almost irreverent, doesn't it? It's not something we like to do; it's uncomfortable. It is much easier to keep the humanity out of the incarnation. Clean the manure from around the manger.

Wipe the sweat out of his eyes. Pretend he never snored or blew his nose or hit his thumb with a hammer.

He's easier to stomach that way. There is something about keeping him divine that keeps him distant, packaged, predictable.

But don't do it. For heaven's sake, don't. Let him be as human as he intended to be. Let him into the mire and muck of our world. For only if we let him in can he pull us out. (From *God Came Near* by Max Lucado.)

REACTION

7. What surprises you about Jesus coming to earth as a human being?

8. What is comforting or encouraging about God taking on a human form?

9. In what way does this truth inspire you?

10. What does Jesus' willingness to become a human being reveal about his heart?

11. In what ways would your life be different if Jesus had not yet come to earth?

12. How will you be a witness to others of the light that Jesus brought into this world?

LIFE LESSONS

John introduces his Gospel as the ultimate life lesson. One of Jesus' attributes that he highlights is the fact that Jesus is *life*. He offers true life. He offers eternal life. As you will discover throughout these lessons, the prologue of John acts like an overture in a symphony. The themes you've just begun to think about will be examined repeatedly in the lessons to come. This study is an opportunity to know Life as you've never known him before.

DEVOTION

Lord God, we come to you, thankful that you have pierced our world. You became flesh and dwelled among us. You saw us in our fallen state, and you reached in and pulled us out. You offered us salvation and mercy. We thank you for what you have done for us.

JOURNALING

How does the light of God shine in your life every day?

FOR FURTHER READING

To complete the book of John during this twelve-part study, read John 1:1–34. For more Bible passages about God becoming a man, read 1 Corinthians 8:5–6; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:7–8; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; and 1 John 1:1–2.