



The Holy Trinity, by Caro

Session One

“In the Beginning”: Jesus at the Center

John 1:1-18



Session Overview



Holy Trinity, by Theodoor van Thulden

Religion is often described as man's search for God. But Christianity is much more about God's search for us. We see this especially in the opening passages of John's Gospel, which reveal that God is madly in love with us—he pursues us and wants a relationship with us and wants to forgive us, comfort us, heal us, and guide us to true happiness. Even though we turned away from him in many ways, his love for us drove him to become one of us—he “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14)—in Jesus Christ in order to die for our sins and draw us back to himself.

Many people today do not know about God's amazing love. They view God as either a harsh judge, who will not

forgive them of their sins, or as impersonal—distant, uninvolved, and indifferent about their lives. Or they make God in their own image—conveniently approving their way of thinking and living and never challenging them to change.

A journey through John's Gospel, however, will challenge all of us to encounter God anew in Jesus Christ. As we will see, Jesus is not just a moral teacher or spiritual guide, but the God who became Man. And that sets him apart from all other religious leaders in the world's history. When we see Jesus, we see the face of God. Indeed, in Jesus Christ, the God of love has unveiled himself most fully to the human family. And he is inviting us to an intimate relationship with him. Some people keep Jesus at a distance as just a part of their lives. But he wants to be at the very center of our lives. Will you let him in?

Step 1: Opening Review (5 minutes)

Use this time during the first session to get to know the others in your group and to familiarize yourself with this workbook, the “Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion” found on page vi, and the following four steps that you will follow for each session.

Step 1: Opening Review (5 minutes) – One or more questions will be presented at the beginning of each session to help you recall the main theme from the previous session and to help you prepare for what you will cover next.

Step 2: Video Presentation (30-35 minutes) – The *Follow Me* video presentations will guide you through the Gospel of John, providing unique insights and focusing on practical themes we can apply to our lives—themes such as discipleship, humility, mercy, and love.

Step 3: Small-Group Fellowship (30-40 minutes) – Engaging discussion questions will give you and your group an opportunity to grow in fellowship as you explore the profound mysteries of the Gospel of John. Each session will close with a prayer that relates to that week’s theme.

Step 4: Home Preparation: Looking Ahead – To prepare for the next session, you will be asked to read passages from the Gospel of John and to ponder some of the points from your reading.

The Seven Signs

The word “sign” is used often in the New Testament to describe Jesus’ mighty deeds. In the Gospel of John, however, these signs are more than displays of Jesus’ divine power. They each unveil something important about his identity and mission. The seven signs in John’s Gospel are:

1. The changing of water to wine at Cana (see 2:1-11)
 2. The healing of the royal official’s son (see 4:46-54)
 3. The healing of the paralytic (see 5:1-9)
 4. The multiplying of loaves and fish (see 6:1-14)
 5. The healing of the man born blind (see 9:1-41)
 6. The raising of Lazarus from the dead (see 11:17-44)
 7. The resurrection of Jesus (see 20:1-18)
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Step 2: Video Presentation (30-35 minutes)

“In the Beginning”: Jesus at the Center (John 1:1-18)

I. Introduction to the Gospel of John

A. Different from the other three Gospels

1. Takes us into a different world, a “high mountain” perspective
2. Differs in style, stories, structure, major themes
3. Final Gospel written, by the “Beloved Disciple” (John)

II. Three Keys for Unlocking the Mystery of the Gospel of John

A. Stage on which Jesus appears

1. Similar to a play, where one first observes the setting
 - a. Luke’s Gospel begins with Zechariah going into the Temple to offer sacrifice
 - b. Mark’s Gospel opens in the desert with John the Baptist preparing the way of the Messiah, to the prophecy of Isaiah – “a voice crying out in the wilderness”

- c. Matthew’s Gospel opens with the royal genealogy; shows Jesus’ ancestry from David back to Abraham

2. John’s Gospel begins with: “In the beginning was the Word ...”

- a. St. Augustine: “These words are worthy of being written in gold and placed in every church around the world”
- b. Refer to the opening line of Genesis, the very first words of the Bible
- c. Reflection on the mystery of God’s inner life: “and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14) – “dwelt” = God’s holy presence among the people in the Tabernacle

B. Theme of signs

1. Miracles as “signs” in John’s Gospel that tell us something about Jesus – who he is

2. “Book of Signs” – six miracles in the first eleven chapters

- a. Wedding feast at Cana (see 2:11) – “the first of his [Jesus’] signs”
- b. Healing of the royal official’s son (see 4:54)
- c. Healing of the paralyzed man at the pool (see John 5)
- d. Feeding of the five thousand (see John 6)

e. Restoring sight to the blind man (see John 9)

f. Raising Lazarus from the dead (see John 11)

3. Jesus enters Jerusalem to be glorified – his passion, death, and resurrection as seventh miracle

4. Second half of John (John 12–21) = “Book of Glory”

5. Different responses to Jesus’ signs

C. “I am” statements

1. Jesus says “I am” seven times in John’s Gospel, each time making a profound statement about himself

a. “I am the bread of life” (6:35)

b. “I am the light of the world” (8:12)

c. “I am the door [gate] of the sheep” (10:7)

d. “I am the good shepherd” (10:11)

e. “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25)

f. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (14:6)

g. “I am the true vine” (15:1)

2. “I and the Father are one” (10:30)

a. Jesus claims to be God

b. No other major religious leader (Muhammad, Confucius, Buddha) claimed divinity

c. Made in reaction to Jewish religious leaders who condemned Jesus for blasphemy, for claiming to be God

3. “Before Abraham was, I am” (8:58) – uses divine name (YHWH), revealed to Moses at the burning bush (see Exodus 3) and applies it to himself

4. Some see Jesus merely as a “wise sage” or a “good man” – if he is God, we must accept the entire package



– Takeaways –

1. Jesus reveals that he is more than a great prophet, wonder-worker, or teacher. He is the eternal Son of God, the “Word made flesh” (John 1:14).
2. Jesus challenges you to make a choice: Who is Jesus for you?

Step 3: Small-Group Fellowship (30-40 minutes)

Discussion Questions

1. Most people in the modern world believe in God. What are some of the common ways people think of God today?

2. How are those views different from what the Bible reveals about God?

3. Do you really believe God wants a personal relationship with you? Do you believe God loves you and wants to help you, forgive you, heal you, and care for all your needs? What are some of the things that make it difficult sometimes for you to believe in this personal God?

4. Not everyone in John’s Gospel sees in Jesus the divine Son of God. How do the following people view him?

a. Nicodemus: “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher” (John 3:2).

b. The paralyzed man after he is healed by Jesus: “The man who healed me said to me, ‘Take up your pallet, and walk’” (John 5:11).

c. The crowds after the feeding of the multitude: “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!” (John 6:14).

d. The crowds in Jerusalem: “Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?” (John 7:25).

e. Pilate: “Here is the man!” (John 19:5).

5. In what ways do people today think of Jesus as a mere man?

6. What does John's Gospel reveal about Jesus' identity? How is this different from most modern conceptions about him? Consider the following passages:

a. **John 1:1-3, 14:** "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." What does this tell us about Jesus? Is Jesus merely a man?

b. **John 10:30, NAB:** "The Father and I are one." What is Jesus saying about himself? How do the Jewish leaders understand this statement? (See John 10:31-33.)

c. **John 8:58:** "Before Abraham was, I am." Based on the video presentation, what is the significance of "I am"? How do the Jewish leaders respond to this statement?

7. Other religious leaders in the history of the world claimed to be prophets sent from God or messengers offering teachings about God or a way of life. How is Jesus portrayed as different in the following passages?

a. Consider **John 14:6:** Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

b. Consider **John 11:25-26**: Jesus said, “He who believes in me ... shall never die.”

8. Who is Jesus for you? What can you do to welcome Jesus as not just one part of your life, but as the very center of your life?



The Last Supper, by Duccio

