JESUS
A Study on the Words of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

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24 LESSONS — STUDENT GUIDE
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Foreword

The twenty-four lessons selected for this study come from all four Gospels and are arranged in the sequential order of Matthew. The four Gospel writers record about 270 events, miracles, and teachings from Jesus’ life, yet aside from Jesus’ resurrection, only one of His miracles is common to all four: the feeding of the five thousand. The twenty-four lessons begin with John’s bold and clear statement of the deity of Jesus—He is the Word of God, who was with God, and who was God from the beginning. The study ends with Jesus’ ascension and His Great Commission to all who would be His disciples.

Familiar events of Jesus’ life are included in the twenty-four lessons. These include Jesus’ miraculous birth, temptation in the wilderness, the calling of the disciples, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. The lessons also include the great themes of Jesus’ ministry—His healing ministry, His great sermons and parables, His miracles demonstrating His lordship over His creation, and His teachings about the sacraments and prayer.

Each lesson is a stand-alone study that is not dependent on the previous lessons so that guests and visitors will feel comfortable joining your class in mid-stream. Lessons are designed to be completed in an hour with opening and closing prayers. We encourage participants to join in the opening prayer with whatever prayer requests and thanksgivings they have on their hearts. The closing prayer is a blessing on the class for the week to come.

The leader guide includes extensive notes to help the leader prepare for the class. Many of the examples come from our own personal experience, so the leader can feel comfortable drawing from his or her own experience. You will find there is too much material rather than too little. Summary and application questions are generally at the end of the lesson. You can focus on those if time runs short. Another helpful strategy to facilitate the discussion is to hand out the lessons a week in advance so that class participants can use the study as their devotional during the week.

A twenty-four-week-long Bible study may sound like a long time; it is certainly contrary to modern studies that change the topic every six to twelve weeks. But you will find that the study of Jesus’ life and ministry will not grow wearisome. If you do have time constraints, a good survey of Jesus’ life could also be done in twelve weeks using Lessons 1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 20, 22, and 23. Whichever study you decide to undertake, we pray that God richly blesses you with His peace and abundant blessings.
Christ, the Word

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (John 1:1)

**Prayers**

**Background**

The Holy Spirit guided each Gospel writer to direct his account to a different Christian group with a different point of emphasis:

Matthew wrote to a Jewish community. Also known as Levi, this tax collector was one of Jesus’ twelve disciples. Matthew begins with Jesus’ genealogy, showing He is in the line of David. This first Gospel includes the most references to Old Testament prophecies and the largest number of miracles to demonstrate to Jewish readers that Jesus is the Messiah.

Mark wrote to Gentiles, most likely Romans. The second Gospel is attributed to John Mark, a close associate of Peter in Rome who probably acted as Peter’s secretary. Mark begins with John the Baptist, who fulfilled Old Testament prophecy by calling Israel to repentance to receive their Messiah. Mark is the shortest Gospel, and many scholars believe it was written first.

Luke wrote to Gentiles (Greeks) and places the birth of Jesus in the historical context of the Roman world. Luke was a physician and companion of Paul who traveled with him on many of his missionary journeys recorded in Acts. He carefully investigated the life of Christ from eyewitnesses to write an orderly account of the Gospel to make his benefactor, Theophilus, certain of all the things he had been taught about Jesus. He wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

John begins his Gospel at the moment of creation, giving us a glimpse into
eternity where Jesus dwells in glory with the Father. John was one of Jesus’
twelve disciples. His Gospel focuses on the deity of Jesus as the Son of God, His
role in creating the universe, and His union with God the Father. John provides
unique insights in Jesus’ Jerusalem ministry and His final hours before the
crucifixion.

**READ JOHN 1:1–18—THE WORD BECAME FLESH.**

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 was not any
thing made that was made. 4. In Him was life, and the life was the
light of men. 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 bear witness about the light, that all might
believe through him. 8. He was not the light, but came to bear wit-
tness about the light.

9. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the
world. 10. He was in the world, and the world was made through
Him, yet the world did not know Him. 11. He came to His own, and
His own people did not receive Him. 12. But to all who did receive
Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become chil-
dren of God, 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 have
seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of
grace and truth. 15. (John bore witness about Him, and cried out,
“This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks be-
fore me, because He was before me.’”) 16. For from His fullness
we have all received, grace upon grace. 17. For the law was given
through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18. No
one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side,
He has made Him known.


   a. Why does John refer to Jesus as the Word?
b. What are the attributes of the Word in verses 1–3?

2. In addition to John 1:3, discuss how other scriptural references develop the role of God in creation. Refer to Genesis 1:1–3. How did God create the heavens and earth—and light?

a. Read Genesis 1:26. Why does God refer to making man in “Our” image? (See these other plural references: Genesis 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8. See also references to God’s council: 1 Kings 22:19–23; Job 15:8; Jeremiah 23:8.)

b. What details of Christ’s role in creation does Hebrews 1:1–3 add?
3. Referring again to John 1:1–3, how might Jewish and Gentile readers differ in their views of John’s opening, “In the beginning was the Word”?

4. John 1:4–5, 7–9 refers to life and light in Christ. Life and light are common themes in John. John refers to life forty-seven times and to light twenty-four times. Consider the following references:

   a. What aspects of life are referred to in the following verses?

   Genesis 1:26–27

   Psalm 139:13–14

   Ephesians 2:10
b. What aspects of life are referred to in John 3:16 and John 6:51?

John 3:16

John 6:51

c. Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). What does this promise of “abundant life” or “life to the full” mean to you?

5. What does John mean by describing Jesus as light, the light of men? Refer to the following verses.

b. “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

c. “The Lord is God, and He has made His light to shine upon us” (Psalm 118:27).

6. In John 1:6–8, 15, John the Baptist gives testimony that Jesus is the Son of God, Christ the Lord. What are the other testimonies that bear this truth? See John 5:31–40.
7. In John 1:10, the world does not recognize Jesus as Creator or Lord. What do those who receive the Word and those who reject the Word have in common?

a. What “right” do those who receive the Word have?

b. How would you summarize the essence of the Gospel message presented in these passages? Compare to John 3:16.

c. What blocks understanding and recognition that Jesus is God Incarnate, life, and light?
8. In John 1:14–18, John introduces another name for Jesus—the “only Son”—as he discusses Jesus in the context of John the Baptist and Moses.

   a. What does Jesus have in common with the prophets?

   b. How is Jesus different from other prophets?


Closing Prayer and Blessing