

Through The Lens Of Jesus

Today we're beginning a short series called **The Good Book**.

And over the next few weeks, we're going to talk about how we read the Bible.

- Not just whether we read it.
- Not just how often we read it.
- But how we understand what we're reading.

Week 1: through the lens of Jesus

Week 2: Fulfilled in Jesus

Week 3: Participating with Jesus

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So here's the truth: everybody brings assumptions to the Bible.

Nobody reads the Bible from nowhere.

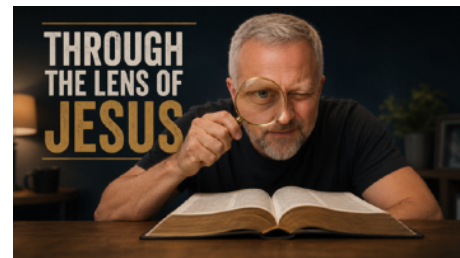
Some of us bring our childhood church.
Some of us bring fear.
Some of us bring shame.
Some of us bring a favorite preacher.
Some of us bring a theology podcast.

But everybody brings a lens.

The question is not, "Do I have a lens?"

The question is:

Is my lens Jesus?



ME — The Telescope

Let me begin with an image.

For most of human history, people looked up at the night sky and saw stars.

They saw lights.
They saw patterns.
They saw beauty.
They saw mystery.



And they were really seeing something.

They weren't wrong to say, "There is something glorious up there."

But they couldn't see very far.

Then, in the early 1600s, Galileo turned a telescope toward the sky.



And by our standards, it was incredibly simple.

It was basically a wooden tube with some glass in it.

But it changed the world.

Suddenly people could see things they had never seen before.

The moon had mountains.

Jupiter had moons.

The heavens were more complex than people had imagined.

But then fast-forward hundreds of years.

Now we have telescopes like Hubble and James Webb.

And suddenly we're seeing galaxies, nebulae, ancient light, images of the universe that are almost too beautiful to process.

Same universe.

Better lens.

Clearer image.

Fuller picture.



And I think that helps us understand what we mean when we say we read the Bible through Jesus.

The Bible helps us see God.

- It gives us a real witness.
- A true witness.
- A Spirit-inspired witness.



But Jesus gives us the clearest possible image of God.

The Bible is not bad vision.
The Bible is not false vision.

But if we stop short of Jesus, it's a little like trying to understand the universe through a wooden telescope and then arguing online like we work for NASA.

The *Bible is the telescope.*

Jesus is the clearest image.

Scripture helps us see.

But Jesus shows us what God is really like.

WHICH LEADS TO MY BIG IDEA FOR THE DAY:

**Big Idea: The Bible helps us see God,
but Jesus shows us God perfectly.**



EVERYBODY BRINGS A LENS



WE — Everybody Has a Lens

And this matters because the Bible has been used to create very different pictures of God.

Some...God who looks angry, distant, violent, easily offended, and mostly disappointed.

Some ...come away with a God who feels like a cosmic probation officer.

Some ...come away believing God's holiness and God's love are in tension with each other.

Like God is partly love, partly wrath, partly mercy, partly judgment—and depending on what day you catch Him, you might get a different version.

But the Christian claim is *not simply that God **has** love.*

The Christian claim is:

God is love.

That is one of the deepest theological statements in Scripture.

God can be just.
God can be merciful.
God can judge.
God can correct.
God can confront.
God can heal.

But God never stops being love.

Whatever God does, God does as love.

**SO HERE'S THE LENS I WANT
YOU TO HAVE:**

**“god is love” “Jesus reveals
that love”**



Ever read a biography?

Imagine reading a biography about Abraham Lincoln.

- You can learn a lot.
- You can understand the major events of his life.
- You can hear stories, study his speeches, and gain real insight into who he was.

But it's still someone else telling the story.

**The author is limited by the sources they have,
the angle they take,**

the questions they ask, and the details they choose to include.

Even the best biography can only give you a window.

Now imagine going back in time and actually sitting across the table from Abraham Lincoln.

Hearing his voice.

Watching his face.

Feeling the weight of his presence.

Asking him questions.

That would be different.

A book can tell you about a person.

But meeting the person brings a clarity

no book can fully replace.

And that's the point John 1 is making.

The Scriptures truly tell us about God.

But Jesus is God showing up in person.

The Bible gives us a faithful witness.

Jesus is the living Word in flesh and blood.

So let's go to John 1.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John is going to pull the camera all the way back.

He's going to say, "Before we talk about Bethlehem,

before we talk about miracles,

before we talk about the cross,

before we talk about anything else—you need to know who Jesus is."

• Before Mary. Joseph. Rome. Israel. Abraham. Adam.

John begins where Genesis begins:

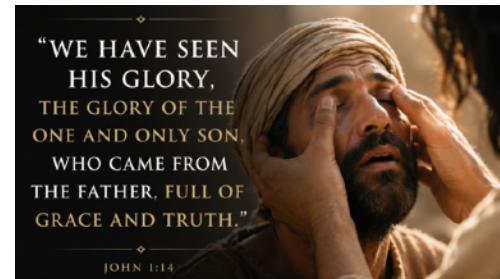
"In the beginning..."

Genesis begins: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

John begins: "In the beginning was the Word."

John is intentionally echoing creation.

He wants us to hear Genesis in the background.



In Genesis, creation begins with God speaking.

God says: “Let there be light.”

And there was light.

- God speaks, and worlds come into being.
- God speaks, and chaos receives form.
- God speaks, and darkness is interrupted by light.

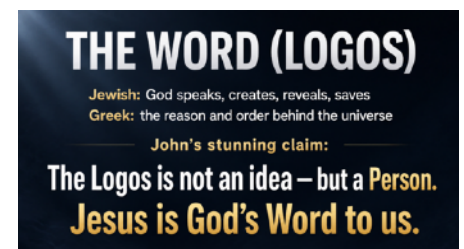
Now John says:

That creative Word...
that divine speech...
that wisdom and self-expression of God...
has entered the human story in Jesus.

This is why John calls Jesus the Word.

The Greek word is **Logos**.

And Logos can mean word, speech, reason, message, meaning, self-expression.



In the Jewish imagination, God's Word was powerful and active.

God speaks, and creation happens.

God's Word reveals.

God's Word saves.

God's Word accomplishes His purpose.

The Logos is not an abstract idea.
The Logos is not merely a religious concept.
The Logos is not just a sound from heaven.
The Logos is a Person.

Jesus is God's Word.

Jesus is God's self-expression.

Jesus is what God has to say.

That's the mystery of John 1.

**Everything God wants to say,
communicate, or express—God's
wisdom, creativity, and word to us
—is Jesus.**



Jesus is God's living, breathing Word.

John Starts With Creation

Now why does John start this way?

Why not just say, "Jesus was born in Bethlehem"?

**Because John wants us to understand that Jesus is
not simply a good teacher, a prophet, or a moral
example.**

Jesus is not God's backup plan.

Jesus is not plan B.

No.

John says: “In the beginning was the Word.”

Not “in the beginning, the Word began.”



When the beginning began, the Word already was.

- Before time, He was.
- Before stars, He was.
- Before matter, He was.
- Before the first human prayer, He was.

And then John says:

“The Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

That is mysterious.

The Word was with God.

So there is relationship.

And the Word was God.

So there is unity.

Distinct, yet one.

Relationship, yet shared divine life.

But this is why Christians talk about God as Trinity.

Before anything was created, God was not lonely.

God was not isolated.

**God was not a solitary power
sitting in eternal silence thinking,
“I should make humans because
I need someone to love Me.”**

Before creation, God already existed as communion.

Father, Son, and Spirit.

Eternal love.

Eternal life.

Eternal fellowship.

**So creation is not God trying to fill a hole in Himself.
Creation is God sharing the life He already has.**

Because if God is eternal love, then the universe does not begin with violence, lack, loneliness, or fear.

The universe begins in love.

And John says the One through whom all things were made has now come among us.

John pulls us back so far that we don't just see Jesus as part of the story.

We see that Jesus is the One through whom the story exists.

John is saying:

- Don't just look at Jesus from the ground level.
- Don't just see Him as one more figure in religious history.
- Pull the camera all the way back.
- This is the eternal Word through whom all things came to be.

John says:

**“All things came into being through him,
and without him not one thing came into
being.”**



Stars.
Galaxies.
Atoms.
Oceans.
Mountains.
Music.
Laughter.
Human breath.
Human bodies.
Human longing.

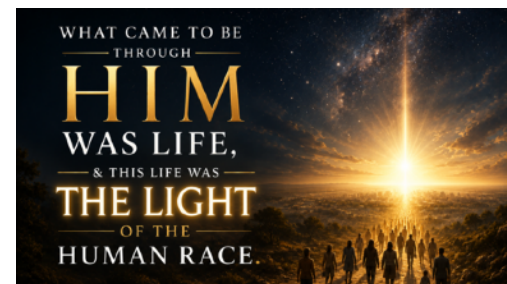
Everything came to be through Him.

And then John says:

**“In him was life, and the life was
the light of all people.”**

Jesus does not merely give life like it's an object He hands out.

John says:



In Him was life.

Life is in Him.

The life of God is in Him.

And that life is light.

**This means Jesus does not come merely to give
us information about God.**

He comes to give us life.

And this is where Bible reading can go wrong.

We can treat Scripture like it is mainly a database of
religious information.

A place to gather doctrines.

A place to win arguments.

A place to prove we are right.

But John says the Word is life and light.

So if our Bible reading makes us more informed but less
alive, something is off.

If our Bible reading makes us more certain but less loving,
something is off.

If our Bible reading makes us more defensive but less like
Jesus, something is off.

Because the Word brings life.

The Word Became Flesh

Now we come to the center of the passage.

John 1:14:

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us...”

This is incarnation.

John does not say the Word appeared to be flesh.

John does not say the Word visited flesh.

John does not say the Word borrowed a body.

John does not say the Word wore humanity like a costume.

The Word became flesh.

The eternal Son entered

fully into our human condition.

He took on our skin.

Our blood.

Our hunger.

Our exhaustion.

Our tears.

Our vulnerability.

Our limits.

**The One through whom all things were made
became a baby who had to be held.**

The One who holds the universe together had to be carried by Mary.



The One who gives breath to all creation had to learn how to breathe with human lungs.

The One who spoke stars into existence had to learn human words.

That should make us stop.

This is not just a doctrine.

This is wonder.

The infinite became intimate.

The eternal entered time.

The Creator entered creation.

The invisible God became visible in a human face.

That is why we do not merely say, “God gave us information.”

We say: God gave us *Himself*.

And notice what John does not say.

John does not say: “The Word *became a book*.”

John says: “The Word *became flesh*.”

That does not make the Bible less important.

It tells us what the Bible is *for*.

**The Bible is the Spirit-inspired witness
that brings us to the living Word.**

The Bible is the word about the Word.

But Jesus is the Word made flesh.

Or to go back to the telescope image:

- The Bible is the telescope.
- Jesus is the clearest image of God.

We do not worship the telescope.

We look through it until we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

And if the telescope is being used to make God look less like Jesus, then we are using the telescope wrong.

John continues:

“The Word became flesh and lived among us.”

That word translated “lived” or “dwelt” carries the idea of pitching a tent, or tabernacling.

That would have been loaded language for Jewish readers.

In Israel’s story, the tabernacle was the place of God’s presence.

It was the tent in the wilderness where God dwelled among His people.

In other words:

The presence of God is no longer centered in a tent.
The presence of God is no longer centered in a temple building.
The presence of God is embodied in Jesus.

Jesus is the meeting place of God and humanity.

Jesus is where heaven and earth come together.

Jesus is God with us.

And John says: “We have seen his glory.”

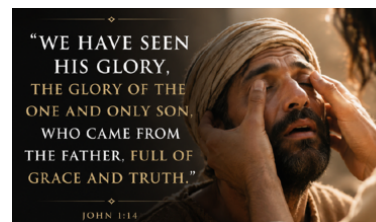
Now when we hear glory, we often think bright light, power, thunder, smoke, fire.

And there is truth in that.

But what glory does John show us in Jesus?

A glory that.... touches lepers.

- eats with sinners.
- washes feet.



- weeps at tombs.
- forgives enemies.
- that is lifted up on a cross.
- A glory full of grace and truth.

John is saying:

The faithful love of God has taken on a human face.

God's glory looks like Jesus.

Not raw power.

Not religious intimidation.

Not fear.

Jesus.

Now look at John 1:18.

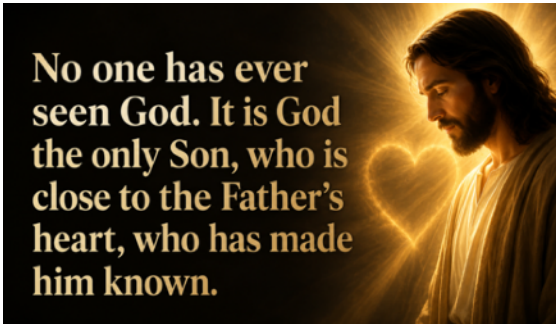
“No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.”

This verse is huge.

John says:

“No one has ever seen God.”

Think about that.

A glowing heart next to a profile of Jesus.

**No one has ever
seen God. It is God
the only Son, who is
close to the Father's
heart, who has made
him known.**

- Moses?
- The prophets?
- Isaiah?
- Ezekiel?
- Israel at Sinai?

They truly encountered God.

**But John says none of them saw God with
final, complete, undistorted clarity.**

They saw truly, but not fully.

Like looking at the sky through a wooden telescope.

Real vision.

Limited vision.

But then John says the Son, who is close to the Father's heart, has made Him known.

The Greek word behind “made Him known” ...

It means to explain, narrate, unfold, make known.

So we could say:

Jesus explains God.

Jesus narrates God.

Jesus is God's self-interpretation.

If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus.

If you want to know how God feels about sinners, look at Jesus.

If you want to know how God responds to the broken, look at Jesus.

If you want to know what holiness looks like, look at Jesus.

If you want to know what judgment looks like, look at Jesus.

If you want to know what love looks like when it enters a violent world, look at Jesus.

John 1:18 is why we have our big idea:

The Bible helps us see God,

but Jesus shows us God perfectly.

The Bible gives us the inspired story of humanity encountering God, wrestling with God, obeying God, misunderstanding God, resisting God, and being drawn toward the fullness of revelation.

But Jesus is not one more step in the process.

Jesus is the fullness.

This is why Hebrews says:

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.”

God has spoken in many ways.



Creation speaks.
Prophets speak.
Scripture speaks.

But the Son is God's final and fullest self-revelation.

So when we read the Bible, we do not read Jesus through every other picture of God.

We read every picture of God through Jesus.

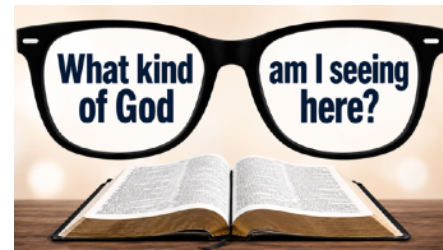
YOU — How Do We Read Now?

So what do we do with this?

Let me give you three questions to bring to the Bible.

1. “What kind of God am I seeing here?”

Every time we read Scripture, we are forming a picture of God.



So ask: “What kind of God am I seeing here?”

Am I seeing a God who looks like Jesus?

- A God who moves toward sinners?
- A God who heals?
- A God who forgives?
- A God who tells the truth?
- A God who confronts oppression?
- A God who gives Himself for His enemies?

Or am I forming a picture of God that contradicts the life, words, and actions of Jesus?

2. “How does this verse lead me to Jesus?”

Not just:

“What does this verse say?”

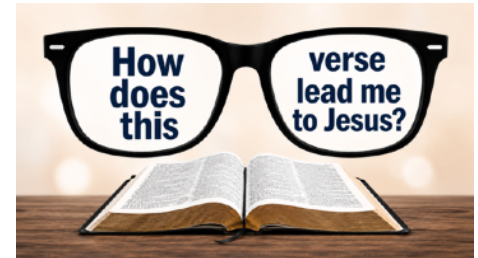
But:

“How does this verse lead me to Jesus?”

“How does it help me have confidence to relate to him?”

Because Christians do not read Scripture as a flat collection of disconnected verses.

We read it as a story that finds its center and meaning in Christ.



3. If it doesn't look like Jesus, keep reading.

There are passages in the Bible that are hard.

There are passages that raise questions.

There are passages that do not immediately look like Jesus.

And when we encounter those passages, we do not throw the Bible away.

But we also do not throw Jesus away.



We keep digging.

We study context.

We ask better questions.

We listen to the whole story.

We read through the cross.

We read through resurrection.

We read through the Word made flesh.

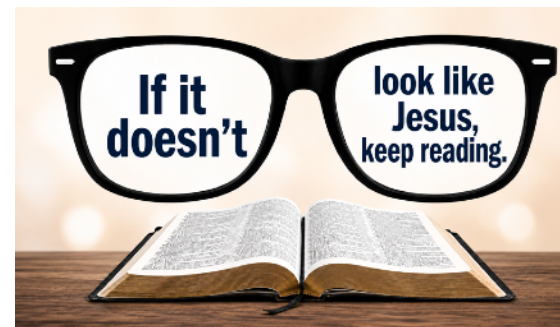
And we say:

**“If it doesn’t look like Jesus, I’m not
done reading yet.”**

That is not disrespect for the Bible.

That is honoring the purpose of the Bible.

Because Jesus said the Scriptures testify about Him.



CLOSING

**Maybe the best picture of this is Saul
of Tarsus.**

Before he was Paul the apostle, he was Saul the Pharisee.

And Saul knew his Bible.

He knew the Law.

He knew the prophets.

He knew covenant.

He knew holiness.

He knew who was clean and unclean, who was faithful and unfaithful, who was in and who was out.



And in his mind, he was defending God.

So when followers of Jesus began saying that a crucified man was Israel's Messiah, Saul didn't hear good news.

He heard blasphemy.

That's what makes his story so sobering.

Saul wasn't an atheist who needed to start taking the Bible seriously.

Saul was a Bible reader who needed to meet Jesus.

Because you can know the Scriptures and still miss the heart of God.

Then, on the road to Damascus, Saul encounters the risen Christ.

And in that moment, Jesus does not hand him a different Bible.

Jesus gives him a different lens.

Suddenly Saul has to reread everything.

Abraham. Moses. Covenant. Law. Temple. Sacrifice.
Righteousness. Gentiles. Grace.

All of it now has to be seen through the crucified and risen Jesus.

**The Bible did not become less important to Paul.
Jesus became the One who
made the whole story make sense.**

And that is our invitation.

Not to take Scripture less seriously.

But to take Jesus more seriously.

So when we open the Bible, we ask:

What kind of God am I seeing here?

How does this verse lead me to Jesus?

And if it doesn't look like Jesus...
keep reading.

And that's why we believe:



