

Who Is Jesus?

John 1

- My Hope For us For This First Series:
 - That this study will help us be with Jesus and become like Jesus...so that we can do the things Jesus did.
 - That our church community will grow in love with one another as we pursue Jesus together.
 - That our identity as the body of Christ will be shaped by Christ-like love (serving, supporting & praying for one another).
 - That you will invite friends to join you as we seek to draw near to Jesus through this study.
- 90-Day Journey With Jesus Commitment
 - I'll attend the 90-Day Journey with Jesus sermon series.
 - I'll participate in a 90-Day Journey with Jesus Small Group.
 - I'll follow the 90-Day Gospels reading plan.
 - I'll study the 90-Day Devotionals on Jesus' life and ministry.
 - I'll attend The Chosen movie series on Sunday nights.
 - I'll memorize the 90-Day Journey With Jesus scripture each week.

What image comes to your mind when you think of Jesus? Is it the image that artists have painted throughout the years? Is it the way movies have portrayed Him?

There are a few paintings from history of the way some artists have seen Jesus and thought that He looked. One is very traditional. He's proper. He's pious. He's got a halo behind His head. That's the way many artists, especially in the Dark Ages, painted Jesus. The image most people think of when they think of Jesus is the picture of a white European with blue penetrating eyes and a long, flowing white robe. He looks a little fragile, a little weak, but He's very, very spiritual.

We know Jesus was Middle Eastern. He was Jewish, so His skin was probably darker. His eyes were probably brown, and we know that He was a carpenter growing up. He was in the construction business, so we know He was strong.

There are a lot of misconceptions about what Jesus was like. We've tried to make Him into who we've wanted Him to be. We've tried to make Him fit into our little mold so we can feel comfortable about who He wants to be in our lives. If you asked most people to describe Jesus' personality in one word, most people, when they think of Jesus' personality, the first word that comes to their mind is nice. He was nice and spiritual. Tim Hansel says, "Jesus, to the contrary, was shocking, astonishing, loving, daring, revolutionary, kind, caring, and compassionate."

To come into contact with Christ, to encounter Jesus of Nazareth, to come into the presence of God in the flesh was at times was risky. It was challenging, but it was always a life-changing, life-transforming, and life-giving experience.

The Christian life, as modeled by its founder, is a life of adventure, passion and purpose, meaning and compassion, and daring risk and danger. That's what the Christian life is all about.

Some have said that John chapter 1 is the most profound page in the entire New Testament. We will look at these verses. 1 Timothy 3:16, says, *"Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh."*

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

The story of Jesus was played out on the earth, but it was scripted in heaven. Let's look at what John says about the meaning of the birth of Jesus.

- Jesus Is Heaven's Language.

Jesus is heaven's language. These verses tell us who Jesus is. He is given one of His meaningful titles in the New Testament. Jesus Christ is referred to as The Word.

The Bible is the written Word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the living Word of God.

What is a word? A word is a vehicle of communication. It is by means of words that we communicate our thoughts and our hearts to someone else. I speak to you and as I use words, I convey what I'm thinking and feeling to your heart and mind. When the Lord Jesus Christ was born, God was communicating His mind and His heart to the world. God was communicating His Word.

Someone said that Jesus Christ is God spelling Himself out in a language which man can understand. Words are made up of letters. The Bible says that Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega. That means that He is the A and the Z and all of the letters in between. When Jesus Christ came into the world, He was heaven's language. He was God's Word to mankind.

Who is Jesus? He's the Word. Where did Jesus come from? He came out of eternity. What did Jesus come into the world to do? Look down at verse 18. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten son which is in the bosom of the father, he hath declared him." He has led forth Him. He has shown Him. When Jesus came into the world, He came to make visible the invisible God. He came to reveal the Father to us. If you want to know what God is like, you look at the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to know what God would say, you listen to what Jesus had to say. If you want to know what God would do, you look at the things Jesus did. He came into this world to reveal the Father.

That's not all Jesus came into the world to do. Look at verse 14. "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us." He came not only to reveal the Father, but the word was made flesh. For what purpose was the word made flesh?

The life of Christ, though only 33 years long and only containing three years of public ministry, proclaimed to the whole world that God had come to live among us and to lead us all to pursue holy lives of love by following him, a claim that was vindicated through the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah.

His claims to divinity and authority have spread around the world and shaped our culture more than any other figure. Although hesitant to speak publicly about his Messiahship for much of his ministry, Jesus made clear in multiple ways that he carried with him both the presence and authority of God, making himself equal to God and igniting the tempers of the Jewish leaders. Jesus came to form a people who loved God and reflected him to a needy world by a different kind of life and love that stands out in a needy world, establishing himself as the Lord of that people. All of Jesus's claims and teachings were vindicated by his resurrection from the dead. Because God raised him from the dead, we ought to believe all that he claimed and taught.

Summarizing the life of history's most dominant and unique figure is a challenge. The importance of Jesus is shown by the fact that his life is the dividing point in our calendar between the era before Christ and that which followed the life of our Lord.

1. Jesus Defeated Darkness So We Could Live in The Light.

“In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:4-5

Christ's first act of creation was to shatter the darkness, the physical darkness. Christ's greatest act of love on the cross was to shatter our personal darkness because we all go through dark days. We all experience hurts and wounds. We all go through pain and problems and difficulties, but the real problem is we try to cover it up.

750 years before the birth of Jesus the prophet Isaiah prophesied that the world would be changed by the birth of the messiah.

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” Isaiah 9:2

As we get older, we get really good at hiding our emotions with our facial expressions. It's so easy to put a smile on our face when we're wounded and bleeding on the inside, and maybe you walked in here today, and you're hurting deeply. You're going through the darkest night of your life, but yet you were able to put that smile on and when someone asks you, “How are you doing?” You answer, “Fine. How are you doing? Good to see you.” We keep that facade up, and on the outside we look like we've got it all together, but on the inside we're all a broken mess. We're all broken. We have broken hearts and broken relationships and broken dreams. We're all a mess.

- The Darkness of Doubt

Some of you are going through a personal darkness right now, but God can shine His light in the middle of the darkness. We have to open up and admit it. Maybe you feel like you're in the dark about what God is doing in your life, and you just can't see how God is working right now. You're starting to doubt that God has a purpose for you. Maybe you're starting to doubt God's presence, and it just feels like He's a million miles away. Maybe you're starting to have that huge doubt, the doubt that you begin to wonder: “Does God really care? That question ... does God really care about me? Does He really know what's going on in my life? I'm really trying to serve Him. I'm really following Him. Is He going to fulfill His word and His promise? Is He really going to come through?” Maybe you're even doubting God's existence. God is big enough to handle our doubts.

- The Darkness of Disappointment

We all experience disappointments, and usually the disappointments move us into discouragement, and those can be really dark days and days of depression. We get disappointed with our plans because life never seems to go as planned. Plans never seem to work out, and when a plan that's a really good plan falls through, we get disappointed. But most of all, we get disappointed by people. People will let you down.

“The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.” John 1:9

Light illuminates. Light warms. Light is such a good thing, but light also exposes. If you ever paint your house, you need good lighting in the room that you're painting because, without good lighting, you can't see the streaks and the faults and the places that you've missed, but with good lighting it exposes the faults and flaws. Christ's light, the light of the world, exposes my faults and sins and my mess.

When Christ came, the pure light, the true light, the light of the world, exposed our darkness. Standing next to the perfect light, I see all the darkness in my heart.

Jim Caviezel, who portrays Jesus in the Passion of the Christ was giving an interview, he said no one was hiring him in Hollywood. They were constantly passing him over for other jobs because he was in that movie. At the end of the interview, he recited a poem. We don't know who the author is, it's anonymous, but he recited this poem that he had memorized that meant so much to him.

“Your name may not appear down here in the world's Hall of Fame.
In fact, you may be so unknown that no one knows your name.
The Oscars and the praise of men may never come your way.
Don't forget, God has rewards that He'll hand out some day.
The crowd on earth, they will soon forget you when you're not at the top.
They will cheer like mad until you fall, and then their praise will stop.
Not God. He never does forget, and in His Hall of Fame
By just believing on His Son, forever there's your name.
I tell you friend, I wouldn't trade my name -- however small
It's written there, beyond the stars, at God's celestial hall
For all the famous names on earth and the glory that they share,
I'd rather be an unknown here, and have my name up there. Amen.”

“*The light shines through the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.*” John 1:5

It's so good to know that the Light of the world lives in you. If you're a Christ follower, we're to be a light everywhere we go. We do live in a dark world, so many problems and difficulties, and it seems like sometimes that it's just too much, but the light always extinguishes the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome the light.

“*In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.*” John 1:4

Light and life are inextricably interwoven. You cannot have life unless you have light. When God wanted to bring light, or life, to a chaos and make it a cosmos, in Genesis 1:3, He said, “*Let there be light.*” And when the light came, the seas began to swarm with life. And the trees and the seeds began to bud and blossom and grow. In school, our teacher told us about the word “photosynthesis.”

The word “photo” means “light.” “Synthesis” means “to put together.” Growing things are put together with light, photosynthesis. Light causes these plants to produce chlorophyll, and how the whole life chain is built upon the sunlight. If you were to take the sunlight away from this world, our world would become cold and dark and dead! It's like a man without Jesus. He's cold and dark and dead! When Jesus came into the world, in Him was life, and the life was the light of man! That's the vitality of this life. You want your life put back together? It will be put back together with light.

There is a divine photosynthesis when the Word brings light, and Jesus is the light. And your cold, dark, dead, clammy world will be put back together when the glorious light of the Son of God shines into your heart.

Jesus said in John 10:10, “*I've come that you might have life, that you might have it abundantly.*” There's no life without light. When you get saved, the Lord comes in, turns the light on, and life begins again. Jesus is the light of the world. That little baby in Bethlehem turned the light on and gave us life.

All light is made up of color. There're seven colors in the spectrum. And what do they remind us of? Jesus, the light of the world! And He is absolutely perfect. God is perfect. And so this light with seven colors, the

spectrum, reminds us of the perfection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But put all of those together, and the color is pure white, which speaks of the holiness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, what we need to understand is that color is in light. Objects don't have any color of themselves. The color is in the light. You may say, "Well, this lady down here has on a red coat." No. She has a coat that picks up red out of the light. The color is not in the coat. The color is in the light.

The most gorgeous bouquet in the world, if you take away the light, has no color. There is no color. You don't turn on the light so you can see the color. The color is not there without the light. The color is in the light. Jesus is the one that makes everything glorious, and then He helps us to see what He's made glorious. And He is the glory of God. Christ is the one who gives glory and joy and victory. He's the one who makes this world beautiful in His time. I feel sorry for people who've never seen the light. You don't know the beauty that I know. I'll tell you something, friend. If you don't know Jesus, I know something you don't know. And I see things you don't see, and they're wonderful.

Jesus is the light. Its no wonder in his profound 7 "I Am" statements Jesus declare, "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*" John 8:12

2. Jesus Risked Rejection For The Reward Of Relationship.

"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." John 1:10-11

God gives human beings free will. He gives us the power to reject Him - not just once, but every single day of our lives. He gives us the power to decide that we don't want Him in our lives. He could have programmed us. He could have created us as robots, totally programmed to love and serve and honor and trust Him. But, He didn't do that. He takes a risk. He gives us the very power to reject Him. Why? ...because He wanted the reward of a relationship with you and me.

The Bible says that "*God is love.*" 1 John 4:8 It does not say that God loves, but God is love. Love is useless unless it has some objects to pour itself out on. So, God created you as an object of His love. God made me to love me. He wants me to love Him back, but He didn't create me as a puppet on a string where He controls my every move. He gives me the power to reject Him. You see, as a believer, I have to decide every day if I want to follow Him today or not - if I want to do what I feel like doing or what He wants me to do. He gives us that power to reject Him. Why did He do that? ...because a relationship is not a relationship without the potential to get hurt. It's not really a relationship because the greatest risk is to love someone.

You put yourself out there when you love someone. C.S. Lewis said, "Love anything and your heart will be rung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give it to no one." But there Jesus goes - again and again and again, willingly risking, putting His heart out there for a relationship with you and me. And we've broken His heart over and over and over again.

He could have been the only option. He could have been the only hand reaching out for a relationship with us, but instead, because of His choice, there are thousands of hands reaching out. And His hand now is just one of those hands reaching out to us for our soul, for first place in your life. There's the hand of success and achievement, and it promises so much. And, if you take a hold of the hand of success and achievement, it will pull you up, pat you on the back. But then it will grab hold of you and drag you places you never wanted to go. And it's hard to let go of because you have to keep succeeding and achieving to feel good about yourself - to feel like you're worth something - that you're a somebody. There's nothing wrong with success. It's just that it will never bring happiness in your life.

There's the hand of possessions that reaches out for us, and this hand is full of things, but it always leaves us completely empty because the most important things in life aren't things. There's nothing wrong with nice

things. It's just that they will never bring you happiness.

There's pleasure, and this promises more than any of the others. Pleasure says, "You follow me, and you'll be free! Do whatever you want to do! Do what you feel like doing! Hey, you're the boss! Look out for yourself! Look out for number one! Do what you want! If it feels good, do it!" But before you know it, that hand has you by the throat, and instead of being free, you're trapped and addicted.

There's even the hand of religion and good works. It reaches out and says, "Take hold of me! And you can pull yourself up by your boot straps, because I'm not going to help you any." Follow the rules, rituals and regulations, and then you'll be happy. But religion leaves you more empty than all the others. There are thousands of hands reaching out for us, but there is only one hand reaching for you that created you. God Himself created you. He made you.

He took this great risk to give us free will, to give us the power to reject Him because a relationship is not a relationship unless you have the power to reject the other person. It's not a real relationship.

3. Jesus Modeled Forgiveness For Us So We Could Be Free!

He wraps Himself in human flesh and was born in a filthy animal stable. How vulnerable! The God of the universe becomes one of us - so He can go through all the things that we go through and so we could have a relationship with Him. And then He goes to a cross, and He dies for us because of our sin barrier that keeps us from a relationship with Him. He does all this, all these gambles, all these risks. Why? ...for the reward of a relationship with you and me.

"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

The goal of the 90-Day Journey With Jesus series is really how to become more like Christ.

The word "grace" in the verse is sometimes translated "forgiveness." When we forgive, we receive the reward of freedom.

If we're going to become more like Christ, we've got to take risks like Christ. We've got to be in relationship with other people, learning and growing together, but we also have to forgive like Christ. You see, He risked rejection for the reward of relationship, but we have to risk forgiveness for the reward of freedom. The greatest risk you and I can ever take is to be like Jesus by forgiving others. There are a lot of misconceptions about forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not minimizing the seriousness of the offense. A lot of people, when it comes to forgiveness, think you're supposed to say, "Well, don't worry about it. It's no big deal. It didn't hurt me." Verse 14 says that Jesus was full of "grace" - love and forgiveness and truth.

Forgiveness is not ignoring the truth. Forgiveness is not pretending like it didn't hurt or it was no big deal. No, forgiveness is saying, "It was a big deal, and it hurt me a lot, but I choose to forgive you." Forgiveness is not resuming the relationship without changes. This is probably the number one misunderstanding about forgiveness. A lot of people think that when you forgive someone, it means you totally restore the relationship, and that's not the case. Forgiveness is instant, but it takes time to rebuild trust. Forgiveness is not the same thing as restoring the relationship, and some of you are afraid to forgive someone because you think that if you forgive them, you have to get right back into that relationship just the way it was, and that's not the truth. Maybe your best friend hurt you, and you're afraid to forgive them because you think, "I need to be best friends with them if I forgive them." And that's not true at all. Every time someone hurts you, you are obligated to forgive them, but you're not obligated to instantly restore the relationship. You forgive others when they hurt you, but to

restore a relationship, the offender has to do three things. The offender has to genuinely exhibit repentance through their actions, and not just their words.

Jesus taught us about forgiveness in Matthew 18. “*Then Peter came to him and asked, ‘Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?’ ‘No!’ Jesus replied, ‘Seventy times seven!’*” In the Jewish law, a person was required to forgive someone three times. So Peter doubled it and added one for good measure. He was trying to impress Jesus, and he was expecting Jesus to be really impressed and say something like, “Wow, Peter! You are so spiritual.” But Jesus said, “*No, seventy times seven.*” People couldn't believe it! Their jaws dropped. They were astonished. Jesus always said shocking things. He was saying, “No. You forgive them to infinity and beyond.”

Now what was He saying? He was saying you extend the hand of forgiveness to others.

The hand of forgiveness is the gift that heals the giver. Author Diane Hill says it doesn't matter whether someone deserves to be forgiven, you deserve to be free. You have to risk forgiving others. You have to risk extending the hand of forgiveness to those who've hurt you for your own sake. Otherwise, you'll be trapped by bitterness because resentment and bitterness are the most unhealthy and unhelpful emotions anyone can ever have. It doesn't change the past. It doesn't make a difference in your future. It just messes up your life today.

Booker T. Washington who was discriminated against over and over again said, “I will permit no man to control me and drag me down by making me hate him.” Jesus said, “Forgive every single time, because if you don't, that person who hurt you in your past - you're allowing them to continue hurting you today, and you're allowing them to control you.”

Jesus said another stunning thing about forgiveness that shocked His audience. In Luke 6:27-28 Jesus said, “*...do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*” Now this is just the opposite of what everyone tells you when you're hurt. The world says that when you're hurt, get even! And what does Jesus say? He says, “Do good.”

Jesus says, “Do good” and “bless those,” and “pray for.” Jesus says when you do these three things, it changes the situation. Many times, it will change the whole situation, and it will change you.

Eleanor Roosevelt's best friend said that Eleanor Roosevelt got even with people who hurt her in the very worst way. She forgave them. You know, many times when you forgive someone and you do good to them even after they have hurt you, it just knocks their defenses down. They don't know what to think, and it changes everything.

Forgiveness is not a feeling. Nobody ever feels like forgiving. Forgiveness is a choice. That's why Jesus said you forgive seventy times seven. Bitterness is a poison that will destroy your life, and you don't let that person keep hurting you.

The hand of forgiveness is the true portrait of Jesus. There's an old story that's been passed down through the years about Leonardo da Vinci's painting of The Last Supper. The painting is in the church in Milan of The Last Supper. And the story says that da Vinci was bitter toward a fellow painter who'd really hurt him. And when da Vinci came to paint the face of Judas Iscariot, which is way to the left, and he's the lowest one and he's holding a bag - he's holding the silver - but his head is the lowest. Whenever they painted Jesus in those days, or whenever they painted Judas in those days, they would paint him as the lowest one because of his sin. The story says that da Vinci decided to get even by painting the face of that fellow painter he was bitter toward as the face of Judas, and it gave him a lot of joy to think that people would look at Judas and be reminded of this guy who had hurt him. But then when da Vinci came to paint the face of Christ, he really struggled. He couldn't get it right. And then it hit him. He went and forgave that man, and he changed the face of Judas, and then he was able to paint the face of Christ.

You'll never see what Christ really looks like when you're blinded by bitterness. It is time to let go of that hurt, and you forgive for your own freedom. You forgive because Christ commands it.

The secret to forgiveness is when I remember how much I've been forgiven by Christ. Christ died an excruciatingly painful death on the cross because of my sins, and when I realize how much it cost Him, it's a whole lot easier for me to forgive someone else. Colossians 3:13 tells us. "... *Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*" He extended the hand of forgiveness to me, and I'm to extend the hand of forgiveness to others.

"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13

As we move into this 90-Day Journey with Jesus Christ, I want us all to reach up and take His hand. Some of you, today, need to take that hand for the very first time. You've never received Him in your life. You've never really committed your life to Him. You've been reaching for all these other hands that leave you empty, and it's time for you to reach up and take His hand. There's only one that's nail-scarred. That's how you'd identify Christ. That's the true portrait of what Jesus looks like - the hand that reaches out to you. Others of you who are already believers - you need to reach out and take hold of that hand tighter today and go on this 90-day journey. I want every one of us to go on this 90-day journey.

All of us would say, "I want to be more like Jesus. I want to follow Him. I want to be more like Him in my life." But, it will never happen until you make a commitment to. People say, "I want to be a better husband. I want to be a better wife. I want to be a better dad or mom." It will never happen until you commit to Him. People say, "I want to be a better person." It will never happen until you commit to being a better person. You will never be more like Jesus unless you commit to being more like Jesus, and that's why we put together this 90-day journey.

There are 6 things I want you to commit to doing:

- I'll attend the 90-Day Journey with Jesus sermon series.
- I'll participate in a 90-Day Journey with Jesus Small Group.
- I'll follow the 90-Day Gospels reading plan.
- I'll study the 90-Day Devotionals on Jesus' life and ministry.
- I'll attend The Chosen movie series on Sunday nights.
- I'll memorize the 90-Day Journey With Jesus scripture each week.

One day, you and I will have to stand before Him, and we'll have to look into the nail-scarred hands and we'll have to give our puny excuse for why we didn't have time - why we were too busy to become more like Him - why we were too busy to learn more about Him. You see, one day we'll have to give all our little excuses, and they'll be pretty small excuses when we look into His nail-scarred hands.

I want you to listen to the words of this song, and I want you to think about reaching up. In the quietness of this moment, just realize that God brought you here for a reason. God knew even before the world was made that you would be here on this day, and He wanted you to be here for a reason - so He could say to you – "You matter to Me." You see, He created you - He designed you for a plan, and some of you today need to reach up and take His hand for the very first time. If you've never received Him into your life, then this is your day. I don't know why you think you're here, but I know why you're here - because God wanted you to be here. He knew you would be here today. Just in the silence of this moment, say this prayer to Him - just between you and God.

“Dear God, I need You. I reach out my hand and take hold of Your hand. Thank you for loving me and for dying on the cross for me, and as much as I understand it, I want to follow You from now on. I need Your forgiveness. I need You to come into my life. I want You to show me how to live a life of adventure and risk and purpose and passion and compassion. I need You.”

I want every one of us who are believers to make a new commitment to Him today to reach out our hands and do something a little different this morning. If you would say, “For the next 90 days I commit to become more like Jesus Christ,” reach out your hand as a symbol that you’re reaching out your hand to Jesus for Him to take hold of you like never before, and to walk with Him over the next 90 days and draw close to Him.