

# Adult Teaching Resources

January 19, 2020



## Season after Christmas (January 5)

Now Appearing

John 1:1-9, 10-18 – “The Word that Reveals”

## Epiphany (January 12-February 23)

Matthew 3:13-17 – “A Son Who Pleases”

**John 1:29-42 – “A Lamb Who Leads”**

Matthew 4:12-23 – “A Preacher Who Calls

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# A Lamb Who Leads

John 1:29-42

## FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### Bible Background

*He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated Anointed). John 1:41*

Good news! We all love to hear and when we have it, we want to share it. This morning, Andrew gets the best news of all—he found the Messiah! The news was too good to keep to himself, so he found his brother Peter and shared the good news with him.

We, too, have the good news. As we explore the passage this morning, think about who you can tell. They need some good news, too.

### Opening

After everyone has arrived, ask your group to form smaller groups of 3-4 in each group. Ask everyone to think of the best news they’ve received and have them share that experience with their small group. Then, ask them to think about who was the first person they shared that news with.

Give each group time to listen to the stories and share their experiences with each other.

As time allows, ask for volunteers to share their stories with the larger group.

### Reading the Bible

What did John call Jesus when he saw him? (the Lamb of God)

What did John say the Lamb of God could do? (take away the sin of the world)

For what reason did John baptize with water? (that Jesus might be revealed to Israel)

What did John see? (he saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove)

Did John know Jesus? (no) What did the one who sent John to baptize with water say to him? (He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit)

What did John see and testify? (this is the Son of God)

What did John say when he was standing with his two disciples? (Look, here is the Lamb of God!)

## Reading the Bible *continued*

After the disciples heard that from John, what did they do? (they followed Jesus)

When Jesus saw them, what did he ask? (What are you looking for?)

How did they respond? (Rabbi, where are you staying?)

Who was one of the disciples who heard John speak and who followed Jesus? (Andrew, Simon Peter's brother)

What did Andrew tell his brother? (We have found the Messiah)

When Simon stood before Jesus, what did Jesus say to him? (You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter))

## Making Connections

What is your first memory of Jesus? Who told you about Jesus? How old were you? Where were you? What do you remember? What did you think about everything you heard?

Our passage has this statement from John, "This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'" What does that mean to you, that after John comes someone who ranks ahead of him because he was before him? How do you make sense of that slightly confusing statement?

John calls Jesus, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." What do you call Jesus?

Our Lesson Writers states, "Verse 31 implies that John learned that Jesus was the Messiah only through his baptism: 'I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.'" What significance, or importance, does baptism hold for you?

When have you experience a "passing of the torch" in a ministry setting, when one recognizes his/her ministry has come to the point when it is time for the next person to take over? How was the transition handled among the two leaders? How was the transition handled among the followers?

If you were literally following Jesus and he turned and asked you, "What are you looking for?" How would you respond?

The two disciples followed Jesus and spent time with him. How much time do you spend with Jesus? How do you spend that time?

What is your testimony to having found Jesus? What are the words you tell others about know the Messiah? How often do you share those words?

## So What?

Ask everyone to get back into their small groups from the beginning of the sessions.

Share these words from our Lesson Writer:

“What do we want from Jesus? As Rudolf Bultmann once commented: “It is the first question which must be addressed to anyone who comes to Jesus, the first thing about which he must be clear” (*The Gospel of John, a Commentary* [Westminster John Knox, 1971], 100). Is forgiveness all that interests us, or are we interested in following Christ into a new kind of life?”

Have each small group answer the questions:

What do I want from Jesus?

What interests me into following Christ into a new kind of life?

Give each small group time to share their thoughts with each other. Then, open the floor for a larger conversation with the entire class.

Then, ask the larger group to think corporately about following Jesus.

What do you think our church wants from following Jesus?

What interests our church into following Christ into a new kind of life?

How will we share this good news? Who will we tell?

## The Challenge

This week, you have good news to share. Find one person to share the good news of the Messiah who has changed your life.

## Prayer

*Loving God, thank you for John. Thank you for Andrew. Thank you for Peter. Thank you for Jesus and the good news he brings. Help us to share the good news so that others might come to follow you, too. Amen.*

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Not like the others**—It may seem surprising that the lectionary follows Matthew’s baptism story (last week’s lesson) with the one from John. The purpose is apparently to enrich our understanding of the baptism during the season of Epiphany, which celebrates the appearance and manifestation of Jesus in various ways.

The description of Jesus’ baptism in the Fourth Gospel is one of many differences between it and the other three, known as “Synoptic Gospels” because they are more similar (“synoptic” means “seen together”).

Troy A. Miller offers a helpful reflection on the differences between John and the synoptics:

Do you remember the old Sesame Street game that had four squares and a jingle that went something like, “Which one of these is not like the other, which one just doesn’t belong”? If you played that game with the four Gospels, John’s Gospel would certainly be the one with the lights blinking around it at the end. John records no birth story but has two temple-cleansing stories. He records no parables and identifies Jesus’ miracles as “signs.” He quite often relates not simply *what* Jesus did or taught, but also *why* or *for what reason* he did such things. When compared to the other Gospels, John paints a more divine portrait of Jesus, seemingly not wanting his readers to forget or miss the fact that this earthly Jesus is God’s Son who existed before all time.

(*Feasting on the Word, Year A*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, vol. 1 of Accordance electronic ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), paragraph 3327.)

**How many days?**—John 1:29 begins a sequence of days at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. These are not clearly delineated. Some scholars think there are six days, though others see four. Chapter 1 seems to include four days: (1) Jewish officials question John about his identity [vv. 19-28], (2) Jesus comes to be baptized and John recognizes him as the Messiah [vv. 29-34], (3) John again proclaims Jesus as the Lamb of God and two of his disciples follow Jesus [vv. 35-42], and (4) Jesus goes with the new disciples to Galilee, where he recruits Phillip and Nathaniel [vv. 43-51].

Despite this, 2:1 begins with “On the third day.” This must refer to the third day following Jesus’ baptism, not to the first day mentioned in the book.

Some scholars also read the Fourth Gospel as concluding its account of Jesus’ ministry with a sequence of six days.

## Digging Deeper *continued*

**What time was it?**—The NRSV’s “four o’clock in the afternoon” translates the Greek’s “about the tenth hour,” which is preserved in the King James Version. What does that mean? The Romans reckoned time from midnight, but the writer seems clearly to be following Jewish methods of timekeeping.

The Jewish system considers sundown to be the beginning of a new day: thus, in Genesis 1, the writer says “And there was evening and there was morning, the first day” (Gen. 1:5), and so forth through six days.

In the Jewish system, nighttime hours were divided into four “watches” – sundown to 9:00 p.m., 9:00 p.m. to midnight, midnight to 3:00 a.m., and 3:00 a.m. until sunrise, usually around 6:00 a.m.

Daytime hours were reckoned in accordance with temple activities, beginning with the preparation of the altar for the morning sacrifice at dawn, somewhere around 6:00 a.m. If 6:00 a.m. was the first hour, the tenth hour would be 4:00 p.m.

## The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### Would John the Baptist really have called Jesus the “Son of God”?

It is thought that the Gospel of John – whose author is anonymous – apparently grew out of a circle of believers typically called “the Johannine Community.” The book was probably written late in the first century, probably during the 90s CE. As such, it reflects beliefs that had developed over time and may attribute some of those developed beliefs to the life and teachings of Jesus.

If that is the case, we might assume that John the baptizer’s early reference to Jesus as the “Son of God” could be a retrojection – a later writer putting words in his mouth, so to speak. But is it surprising to think that John would describe Jesus as the Son of God even this early in his ministry?

John was not the first to speak of someone as God’s son. Israel, in a collective sense, is described as God’s firstborn son in Exodus 4:22, where God reportedly instructed Moses to tell the Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son.”

Later, descendants of David who came to the throne were thought of as having been adopted as sons by God. When Nathan relayed God’s promise to David that a descendant of his would rule on the throne of Israel forever, he spoke of when David’s son would take the throne. “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me” (2 Sam. 7:14).

Coronation hymns in the book of Psalms spoke of the newly crowned king as having been adopted by God: “I will tell of the decree of the LORD: he said to me, ‘You are my son. Today I have begotten you’” (Psalm 2:7).

After the kingdom came to an end and no more sons of David ruled in Jerusalem, a belief emerged that God would fulfill the promise of 2 Samuel 7 by raising up a descendant of David as the one anointed to deliver Israel: both “Messiah” in Hebrew and “Christ” in Greek mean “anointed.”

It is unlikely that John the baptizer shared the same beliefs as the later Johannine community, and he would certainly not have thought of Jesus in Trinitarian terms as propounded in Nicea centuries later. Still, since he believed that Jesus was the anointed Messiah, descended from David but also sent by God, he could also think of him as the son of God, though probably without the capital “S.”