

Experiencing the Word of Life



SABBATH—JULY 4

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Deuteronomy 4:1–4; 1 Corinthians 15:4–8; 1 John 1:1–5; Revelation 19:13.

MEMORY VERSE: “We announce to you what we have seen and heard. We do it so you can share life together with us. And we share life with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3, NIV).

IN COURT A MAN STANDS CHARGED WITH MURDER. He swears he is innocent. He claims he did not do it and he was not even at the scene when the crime happened. From his words alone, one could be tempted to believe him.

Then witnesses appear. One after another, the eyewitnesses say the same thing: They saw the man at the scene of the crime. And they saw him do the crime. Details might be different, but the proof of their eyewitness stories is very strong. So the man's guilt becomes very clear.

In the same way, John introduces his letter by stating he belongs to the circle of eyewitnesses who saw Jesus in person. So, as eyewitnesses, they are able to share this life-changing information with others.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Why is Jesus the “Word of life”? What does John hope to do by beginning his letter this way? How can we, even today, be eyewitnesses to Jesus? What part does community (our need for one another) have in the life of a Christian?

SUNDAY—JULY 5**THE BEGINNING TO JOHN'S
FIRST LETTER (1 John 1:1–4)**

What is John saying to us in 1 John 1:1–4? What hope can you get from his words? Also, why do you believe him?

John begins by pointing out that he is an eyewitness of “the Word of life [Jesus]” (NKJV). Verse 2 and the first part of verse 3 focus on and explain this “life.”

What two things does John say will come from his declaration about “the Word of life”?

In verses 1 and 3, John makes seven statements before he finishes the sentence: (1) what was from the beginning, (2) what we have heard, (3) what we have seen, (4) what we have looked at, (5) what we have touched, (6) what we have seen, and (7) what we have heard. Then he ends, “We announce to you what we have seen and heard. We do it so you can share life together with us” (verse 3, NIV). Verse 2 says, “and we announce to you that same eternal [forever; without end] life” (NIV).

These verses show that John wants us to know he has seen and experienced how real God was through Jesus. He wants us to know the eternal life, the fellowship, and the joy we can have through Jesus.

He is the same Jesus that John himself had heard, seen, and touched.



John invites us to experience the same Jesus that he saw, heard, and touched.

What is your own understanding and experience of having joy in the Lord? Have you ever known any Christian who is always joyous? How do we understand the promises of joy when our lives are filled with pain and suffering?

MONDAY—JULY 6**FIRST JOHN 1 AND JOHN 1
(1 John 1:1–5)**

Those who know the Gospel¹ of John are interested when they begin reading the first letter of John and find the introduction to be almost the same as the introduction to John's Gospel.

1. Gospel—one of the first four books in the New Testament that tells the story of Jesus' life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

Read 1 John 1:1–5 and compare it to John 1:1–5. What are some things about them that are almost the same?



Jesus is the Light of life.

Both sections of verses begin almost the same. Both point back to a time in the past, using “the beginning.” Both bring us back to Genesis 1:1, the Creation. Both show the difference between God the Father and the Word (Jesus). Both put God the Father and the Word next to each other in close connection. Both sections also use the image (word-picture) of “life” and “light.” No question, both sections are much alike.

But there are differences too.

What do we find in John 1:1–5 that is not in 1 John 1:1–5?

John’s Gospel strongly points to Jesus as God and Jesus as Creator.

The full title “his Son, Jesus Christ” (NIV) in 1 John 1:3 points to Jesus as a man and as Son of God. But the word *God* does not directly apply to Jesus in the introduction (beginning) to 1 John as it does in the introduction to John’s Gospel. The Gospel of John is also very clear about Jesus in His work as Creator. Nothing was made apart from Him. John has been very clear about both Christ as God and His creatorship.

Also, 1 John points to eyewitnesses and their announcement while John’s Gospel does not. John’s Gospel speaks from a less “personal” point of view.

Taken together, both sections show truths about Jesus that are very important to the plan of salvation.²

Think about all you know about the life of Jesus. What were the things He did, said, and suffered? Also, ask yourself: Why did Jesus do these things? Think about the fact that this Man was also God, the Creator. What hope and encouragement do these truths offer you? How can they help you in dealing with the pressures of life?

TUESDAY—JULY 7

THE WORD OF LIFE (1 John 1:1, 2)

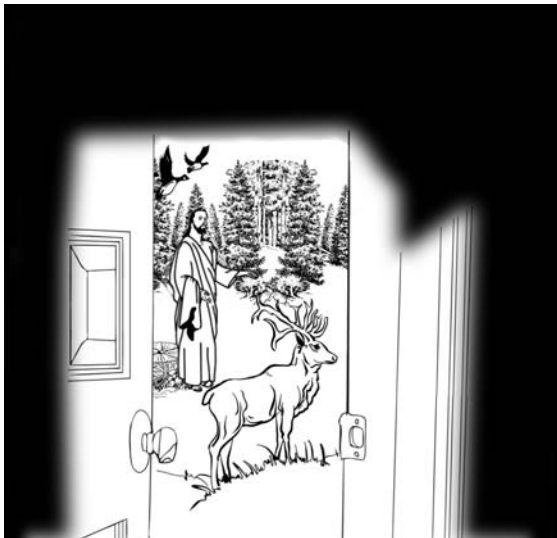
What do you think the wording “Word of life” means? Why does that fit Jesus perfectly?

². plan of salvation—what God has done and is doing to save us from sin.

First John 1:1 speaks of the “Word of life.” This wording also is found in John 1:1–3. It points to Jesus. In Revelation 19, the Rider on the white horse is called “The Word of God” (Revelation 19:13). And it refers to Jesus too. In John’s writings, the “Word” may mean Jesus. For this reason in 1 John 1:1, it may mean Jesus too.

The same is true for the word *life*. Jesus called Himself “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6, NKJV). So the word *life* in 1 John 1:2 surely points to Christ too. No wonder, then, Jesus is the “Word of life.”

What other proof from those verses shows John was pointing to Jesus when He used the wording “Word of life”?



Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Some people have argued the wording “Word of life” means the

preaching of the gospel.³ But the facts point us to Jesus Himself, the Person. It is possible to hear the gospel of Jesus with one’s ears. But it does not make much sense to see the gospel of Jesus with the eyes. It is impossible to touch with one’s hands “the Word of life” if that phrase means the preaching of the gospel. To hear, see, and touch a person makes more sense than to hear, see, and touch the gospel. So, the wording “the . . . life . . . was with the Father and has appeared to us” (1 John 1:2, NIV) also suggests that John had a Person in mind when he spoke about the Word and the life.

If we accept that Jesus is the “Word of life,” what does that mean for us? Study each part of *Word of life*. How do Genesis 1:14; Daniel 5:23; Matthew 8:8; John 1:1–4; and Acts 17:28 help us better understand what this wording really means? More important, what does the wording mean to us personally?

WEDNESDAY—JULY 8

**EYEWITNESSES
(Deuteronomy 4:1–9)**

Many people like to experience an event for themselves. Afterward they are able to share what they have experienced with others. Others just happen to be eyewitnesses of an accident or a crime. Then they may

³ gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news about salvation.

be called to witness in court.

The apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ's life, death, and return to life. This "Christ event" influenced⁴ them so much they could not hold back from sharing it with others.



People like to experience an event firsthand so they can tell others about what it was like. In the same way, John invites us to experience Jesus for ourselves.

John does the same thing in his letters. In 1 John 1:1–4, John claims to have been an eyewitness to Jesus. He makes his claims stronger by saying he not only saw Jesus but touched Him and heard Him too. John also repeats those claims in the verses. He is trying to show that his personal experience with Jesus was real.

John is not the only Bible writer to make some powerful claims about eyewitness events. What do the

following verses in Deuteronomy 4:1–9; Acts 4:20; and 1 Corinthians 15:4–8 have in common with 1 John 1:1–3? Who is speaking, and what was the background for their claims?

Today we cannot be direct eyewitnesses to the events of Jesus' life or to the historical events of biblical history. But that does not mean we still cannot be eyewitnesses to how real Christ is and what He has done for us. But in some ways, our own personal eyewitness story can be a more powerful witness to how real and good God is than the historical events described in the Bible.

What is your own eyewitness story of Jesus? Write it up and bring it to class.

THURSDAY—JULY 9

FELLOWSHIP OF THE SAINTS (Acts 2:42–47)

Someone has said God has no grandchildren, only children. A Christian experience is not something our parents or grandparents give us. We need to make a decision (choice), in our own hearts, to give ourselves to Jesus. Someone else cannot do that for us any more than someone else can sneeze for us. We have to make the choice ourselves. And each one of us has to give everything to Jesus. In this sense, being a Christian is a

4. influenced—to have power or an effect over persons or things.

very personal experience.

At the same time, in those first few verses, John adds another idea of what it means to be a Christian. John invites us to accept his experience about Jesus. John also asks us to experience fellowship⁵ with Jesus and other Christians. In other words, the preaching about Jesus is community building. To accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, as Giver of eternal life, means we are added to the family of believers.

According to 1 John 1:3, what are the blessings of this fellowship?

Jesus Himself has established His community or church (Matthew 16:18). He cares for it the way a shepherd would care for a flock (John 10:14–16). Jesus and His church belong together. The preaching of Jesus and the gospel bring people into fellowship with the Father and the Son and with other believers. There is an unseen heavenly connection and a very real visible connection among these believers. Christians are blessed by the fact they do not have to lead their lives alone. Instead they have become part of Christ's community (group of believers) and family on earth.

How is this Christian fellowship, at its best, pictured in the New Testament in Acts 2:42–47 and Romans 12:3–17?

This week's discussion on 1 John 1:1–4 ends with verse 4. John's goal is for people to enjoy fellowship with God and with believers and for their joy to be made full.

Verse 4 may refer back to the earlier verses. Our joy is complete (made full) because Jesus, who is "that . . . eternal life," has appeared. The verse also may refer to the rest of John's first letter. This letter will go on to show Jesus and salvation through Him and a life with God (which is a life of love). It finally may refer to the future coming of our Lord. So, 1 John 1:1–4 could cover the time of Christ before He came into this world to His second coming.

What has been your own experience about Christian fellowship? What can you do differently? How can you better enjoy, and help others enjoy, the community of fellowship we as Christians enjoy?

FRIDAY—JULY 10

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, "Peace, Be Still," page 340, in *The Desire of Ages*.

"John has known Christ personally. So he desires to share his knowledge with his readers so that they may enjoy the same fellowship he is already enjoying with the Father and the Son. In showing this loving desire, John focuses on Christ as the

5. fellowship—friendship; joining in and taking part; companionship.

eternal God who came into this world as a man. John presents this wonderful knowledge in simple but strong language so that all of his readers, past and present, may build a strong Christian faith in the work of Jesus Christ and who He is.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7, page 629.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ As a class, go over together your own eyewitness stories of Jesus. How are they the same? In what ways are they different? What can you learn from the experience of others to help you better know the Lord? At the same time, what have you witnessed that could help others?
- ❷ What is it about eyewitness stories that can be so powerful? At the same time, why should we not believe every eyewitness story? After all, people do lie, or they simply do not understand things correctly. Have you ever
- thought you understood something, only to realize later you were wrong? If so, share your experience with the class. At the same time, what is it about the eyewitness stories given in the Bible that makes them so believable? Do we believe they are true because they are in the Bible? Or are they in the Bible because they are true? Or is it both?
- ❸ Go over this whole question of fellowship. Why is fellowship so important to all believers? What happens to those who like to go out on their own, separate from any group of Christ? At the same time, what dangers arise from being too dependent on others or on the church? How do we keep the right balance?
- ❹ What can you do to help your local church be more sensitive to the needs of its members, as the early church was? In what areas can your church do better?