

The Creating Word Becomes Flesh

It was a bittersweet day for Kanita. It was her last day at the events and marketing firm. She was headed home to Oklahoma City to take care of her mom, whose health was failing.

Kanita had worked at the Chicago company for more than five years and was one of the few, if any, Christians on staff. The company had afforded her opportunities to be creative and grow professionally. The staff was also welcoming and friendly.

It had been a place where Kanita had shared her Christian principles and perspectives as a matter of response and clarification. She was never rude or overbearing, but she did engage her coworkers when appropriate. Several times she had been sought out by coworkers, who were in the midst of personal conflict and despair. While she was not widely popular or in demand for social hour, Kanita was respected among her coworkers for being “kind, honest and genuine.”

“I hate to see you leave, Kanita,” her executive director said, taking a seat in the empty chair across from her desk. “You have been a great worker, and you are a good person. When you leave, it’s like a light will be going out in this office.”

“It doesn’t have to,” Kanita said, turning around. “Christ is available for anyone. All you or anyone has to do is to reach out to Him.”

- 1.** *In what ways can a bright light be helpful?*
- 2.** *What feelings do people generally have when the dark of early morning fades and the sun begins to rise?*
- 3.** *What are the effects of knowing Christ for those who continually move toward the light that Christ is and provides?*

The Word, and the Witness

John 1:1-9, KJV

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

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by 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 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

John 1:1-9, NIV

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

To begin his Gospel, John went all the way back, to the time of creation. And “in the beginning” (vss. 1-2; see also Gen. 1:1), Jesus, the Word, was already there. He “was with God, and . . . was God. . . . Through him all things were made” (vss. 1, 3). While John spent much of his Gospel detailing the fullness of Jesus’ humanity, he began with an even more important fact: Jesus was, and is, fully God, with authority over all things. And while John’s usage of “the Word” (*logos*) to describe Jesus was unique

to the Gospels, it was a term his readers would have easily recognized. The Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures, which existed in Jesus' time, used *logos* to represent the divine word.

John spoke of Jesus' character and purpose: "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind" (vs. 4). As one both present at and intimately involved with creation, Jesus is the source of both physical and spiritual life. And this light/life is eternal and all-encompassing: it "shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).

It is also interesting to note that the King James, among others, translates "overcome" as "comprehended." Jesus' ways are higher than man's ways (Isa. 55:9)—let alone Satan's. Those who do not know Jesus and remain in darkness "cannot understand [those ways] because they are discerned only through the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:14).

Verse 6 then introduced another man that God sent—Jesus' earthly cousin, John the Baptist. It is likely that he introduced the apostle John to Jesus. John the Baptist "came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe" (vs. 7). And yet, as great a figure as the Baptist was, he "was not the light" but rather was just "a witness to the light" (vs. 8). As he would later say about himself, "He [Jesus] must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30).

The Baptist would have his own ministry of repentance and baptism, but even more important was his witness to the fact that "[Jesus] the true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world" (vs. 9).

4. *How did John describe Jesus at the beginning of his Gospel?*

5. *How did John describe Jesus' character and purpose?*

6. *Who else did John introduce in this passage? What did he say about him?*

Rejected and Received

John 1:10-14, KJV

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which 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 was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 1:10-14, NIV

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

¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The 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.

Continuing his introduction, John now presented a 30,000 foot view of Jesus' ministry on Earth. Even though He had come to Earth—and in fact made the world—"the world did not recognize him" (vs. 10). The darkness of verse 5 had so blinded the world that even when Jesus came to Earth, He still was not recognized as the promised Messiah, let alone as God—even by those who had been given the fullness of God's Word (i.e., the Old Testament) up to that time. Thus, John remarked sadly, "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (vs. 11).

Yet there was, even in John's time, a small but rapidly growing remnant who did recognize and receive Jesus,

and “to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (vs. 12). John then clarified what constituted a child of God: he or she was “born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (vs. 13). Salvation came from God, not from human effort; it required a belief that only God Himself could produce. Later in his Gospel, John would detail a conversation where Jesus further explained what it meant to be born of God, or “born again” (John 3:1-21).

John then summarized Jesus’ earthly ministry, from the perspective of one who did, like John, receive Him: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (vs. 14). This was a critical statement at this time in the history of the early church, as there were already those who insisted that Jesus had *only appeared* to have come in the flesh. As one who walked alongside Jesus for roughly three years, communed with Him after His resurrection, and would once more encounter Him as risen King as described in the Book of Revelation, John was eminently qualified to proclaim, “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).

7. How did John describe the response to Jesus when He came to Earth?



A bedouin tent in the Syrian desert. John said that Jesus came and “made his dwelling [pitched his tent] among us” (John 1:14).

Photo: yeowatzup

8. How did John describe those who did believe in Jesus?

9. How did John summarize Jesus’ ministry, and his own experience of it?

Bearing Witness Here and Now

Courtroom dramas have attorneys, a judge, a jury, and witnesses. A witness has only one function: he or she simply tells what they have seen and heard. Such observations can change minds. They can determine the course of the defendant's life.

Just as John the Baptist gave a witness to the "light" (vs. 8), people telling their story about their experience with Christ is a powerful witness to the light of Christ. They say what they have read, seen, heard, and experienced in Christ. They don't try to coerce or convince or "win" in any way. In such simplicity and innocence, we are much like the once-blind man who unwittingly thwarted the religious leaders because his testimony was so uncomplicated: He insisted he didn't know anything about their politics or their theology. "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" (John 9:25).

Bearing witness of the light, then, is a version of storytelling, which can be very influential in listeners' lives. In a way, John was called to tell the story of Jesus.

Bearing witness can also occur when people demonstrate in their lives what they have seen and heard in Jesus. That may be by their winsome generosity or inexplicable peacefulness in the midst of chaos or their willingness to speak the truth with love and gentleness instead of disdain and harshness. In other words, they reflect the light of grace and truth. Any of this, of course, is led and empowered by Jesus who is the light of the world.

10. *Who have you heard talk about their experience with Jesus and you found it helpful? (Change the name of the person if you wish.)*

11. *When you hear such stories, what most impresses you about what is said or how it is said?*

12. *What is best to avoid in order to let Jesus shine as the true light, full of grace and truth?*

How the Light Has Shone on You

Jesus as the True Light eagerly comes alongside us to change us on the inside, resulting in outward behavior that is a step closer to being full of grace and truth. He helps us become more patient, more straightforward, more aware of others. The capacity to bear witness and to be a witness of Christ's light of grace and truth progresses slowly—that seems to be the reality. But with God's help, we move closer to being a person exemplifying His grace and truth!

► *How has God moved you closer to being a person who lives in and shows grace—God acting through you in ways you cannot act yourself? Ask God to help this overflow from you to bear witness to others of the light of Christ in a natural, yet supernatural way.*

KEY VERSE

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. —John 1:3, KJV

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. —John 1:3, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 4 through July 10

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** John 2:1-11—Jesus Reveals His Glory.
- Tue.** Psalm 6—O Lord, Heal Me!
- Wed.** Matthew 8:5-13—Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant.
- Thu.** John 5:1-9—Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man.
- Fri.** John 9:1-7—Jesus Heals a Blind Man.
- Sat.** Psalm 41—God Heals Their infirmities.
- Sun.** John 4:46-54—Jesus Heals a Royal Official's Son.