



LifeLight

"In Him was life, and that life was the light of men." John 1:4

John, Part 1

—
JOHN 1–11

LEADERS GUIDE

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Revised from material prepared by Milton Rudnick and Roger Sonnenberg

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Cover painting: Apparition of Christ at the Lake of Tiberiade/SuperStock/Peter Willi

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Introduction

Welcome to LifeLight

A special pleasure is in store for you. You will be instrumental in leading your brothers and sisters in Christ closer to Him who is our life and light (John 1:4). You will have the pleasure of seeing fellow Christians discover new insights and rediscover old ones as they open the Scriptures and dig deep into them, perhaps deeper than they have ever dug before. More than that, you will have the pleasure of sharing in this wonderful study.

LifeLight—An In-depth Study

LifeLight is a series of in-depth Bible studies. The goal of LifeLight is that through a regular program of in-depth personal and group study of Scripture, more and more Christian adults may grow in their personal faith in Jesus Christ, enjoy fellowship with the members of His body, and reach out in love to others in witness and service.

In-depth means that this Bible study includes the following four components: individual daily home study; discussion in a small group; a lecture presentation on the Scripture portion under study; and an enhancement of the week's material (through reading the enrichment magazine).

LifeLight Participants

LifeLight participants are adults who desire a deeper study of the Scriptures than is available in the typical Sunday morning adult Bible class. (Mid-to-older teens might also be LifeLight participants.) While LifeLight does not assume an existing knowledge of the Bible or special experience or skills in Bible study, it does assume a level of commitment that will bring participants to each of the nine weekly assemblies having read the assigned readings and attempted to answer the study questions. Daily reading and study will require from 15 to 30 minutes for the five days preceding the LifeLight assembly. The day following the assembly will be spent reviewing the previous week's study by going over the completed study leaflet and the enrichment magazine.

LifeLight Leadership

While the in-depth process used by LifeLight begins with individual study and cannot achieve its aims without this individual effort, it cannot be completed by individual study alone. Therefore, trained leaders are necessary. You fill one or perhaps more of the important roles described below.

The Director

This person oversees the LifeLight program in a local center (which may be a congregation or a center operated by several neighboring congregations). The director

- serves as the parish LifeLight overall coordinator and leader;
- coordinates the scheduling of the LifeLight program;
- orders materials;
- convenes LifeLight leadership team meetings;
- develops publicity materials;
- recruits participants;
- maintains records and budgeting;
- assigns, with the leadership team, participants to small discussion groups;
- makes arrangements for facilities;
- communicates outreach opportunities to small-group leaders and to congregational boards;
- follows up on participants who leave the program.

The Assistant Director (*optional*)

This person may assist the director. Duties listed for the director may be assigned to the assistant director as mutually agreeable.

The Lecture Leader

This person prepares and delivers the lecture at the weekly assembly. (**Lesson material for the lecture leader begins on p. 9.**) The lecture leader

- prepares and presents the Bible study lecture to the large group;

- prepares worship activities (devotional thought, hymn, prayer), using resources in the study leaflet and leaders guide and possibly other, outside sources;
- helps the small-group discussion leaders to grow in understanding the content of the lessons;
- encourages prayer at weekly leadership team and discussion leaders meetings.

The Small-Group Coordinator (*optional; the director may fill this role*)

This person supervises and coordinates the work of the small-group discussion leaders. The small-group coordinator

- recruits with the leadership team the small-group discussion leaders;
- trains or arranges for training of the discussion leaders;
- assists the director and discussion leaders in follow-up and outreach;
- encourages the discussion leaders to contact absent group members;
- participates in the weekly leadership team and discussion leaders equipping meetings;
- provides ongoing training and support as needed.

The Small-Group Discussion Leaders

These people guide and facilitate discussion of LifeLight participants in the small groups. (**Lesson material for the small-group leaders begins on p. 59.**) There should be one discussion leader for every group of no more than 12 participants. The small-group discussion leaders are, perhaps, those individuals who are most important to the success of the program. They should, therefore, be chosen with special care and be equipped with skills needed to guide discussion and to foster a caring fellowship within the group. These discussion leaders

- prepare each week for the small-group discussion by using the study leaflet and small-group leaders guide section for that session (see p. 61);
- read the enrichment magazine as a study supplement;
- guide and facilitate discussion in their small group;
- encourage and assist the discussion group in prayer;

- foster fellowship and mutual care within the discussion group;
- attend weekly discussion leaders training meetings.

Leadership Training

LifeLight leaders will meet weekly to review the previous week's work and plan the coming week. At this session, leaders can address concerns and prepare for the coming session. LifeLight is a 1¹/₂-hour program with no possibility for it to be taught in the one hour typically available on Sunday mornings. Some congregations, however, may want to use the Sunday morning Bible study hour for LifeLight preparation and leadership training. In such a meeting, the lecture leader and/or small-group coordinator may lead the discussion leaders through the coming week's lesson, reserving 5 or 10 minutes for problem solving or other group concerns.

While it requires intense effort, LifeLight has proven to bring great benefit to LifeLight participants. The effort put into this program, both by leaders and by participants, will be rewarding and profitable.

The LifeLight Weekly Schedule

Here is how LifeLight will work week by week:

1. Before session 1, each participant will receive the study leaflet for session 1 and the enrichment magazine for the course. The study leaflet contains worship resources (for use both in individual daily study and at the opening of the following week's assembly) and readings and study questions for five days. Challenge questions will lead those participants who have the time and desire a greater challenge into even deeper levels of study.
2. After the five days of individual study at home, participants will gather for a weekly assembly of all LifeLight participants. The assembly will begin with a brief period of worship (5 minutes). Participants will then join their assigned small discussion groups (of 12 or fewer, who will remain the same throughout the course), where they will go over the week's study questions together (55 minutes). Assembling together once again, participants will listen to a lecture presentation on the readings they have studied in the previous week and discussed in their small

groups (20 minutes). After the lecture presentation, the director or another leader will distribute the study leaflet for the following week. Closing announcements and other necessary business may take another five minutes before dismissal.

In some places some small groups will not join the weekly assembly because of scheduling or other reasons. Such groups may meet at another time and place (perhaps in the home of one of the small group's members). They will follow the same schedule, but they may use a cassette tape to listen to the week's lecture presentation. The discussion leader will obtain the tape and leaflets from the director. A cassette tape version of the lecture is available for purchase from CPH (see your catalogue). Or a congregation may record the lecture given by the lecture leader at the weekly assembly and duplicate it for use by other groups meeting later in the week.

3. On the day following the assembly, participants will review the preceding week's work by rereading the study leaflet they completed (and that they perhaps supplemented or corrected during the discussion in their small group) and by reading appropriate articles in the enrichment magazine.

Then the LifeLight weekly study process will begin all over again!

Recommended Study Resources for John

Concordia Self-Study Bible, New International Version. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986. Interpretive notes on each page form a running commentary on the text. The book includes cross-references, a 35,000-word concordance, full-color maps, charts, and time lines.

Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963. This older volume is a reliable, comprehensive, confessionally sound commentary by a Lutheran theologian.

Luther, Martin. *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John. Luther's Works.* Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. Vols. 22–24. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957, 1959, 1961.

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John, NICNT.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971. Rated by Dr. Erich Kiehl as perhaps the best com-

mentary on John: "demonstrates a wide and careful knowledge of the total content. Written in a simple style with many valuable excursions."

Roehrs, Walter R., and Martin H. Franzmann. *Concordia Self-Study Commentary.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979. This one-volume commentary on the Bible contains 950 pages and is tailored for lay use.

Westcott, B. F. *The Gospel according to St. John,* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950 reprint. An old standard; a helpful resource.

Every Voice a Song Pipe Organ Accompaniment for 180 Hymns and Liturgy. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House (order no. 99-1565). Use this music CD for worship hymn accompaniment.

Using Overhead Transparencies

Some lecture leaders like to use the overhead projector. Others find it to be more a hindrance than a help. We recommend that you use an overhead or a chalkboard to show at least the outline of each lecture.

For those who would like to experiment with further use of an overhead projector, use the blacklines in the Appendix of this guide to make overhead transparencies for the lecture in session 1. To make transparencies for use on your overhead projector, simply place the blackline masters on a copy machine and hand-feed plastic transparency sheets, one for each blackline master. (Note that there is one transparency for each one or two sections of the lecture.) The overheads can help the lecture leader stay on track, enhance interest, and still allow for flexibility in the oral presentation.

As your time and interest in this approach permit, follow the same pattern for the lectures in sessions 2 through 9.

The Messenger Is the Message

John 1:1–18

Preparing for the Session

Central Focus

God became a human being in order to make Himself known to us and to establish a personal relationship with us.

Objectives

That participants, by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word,

1. become increasingly aware that the Jesus whom they will meet in the Gospel is God in person, communicating His love to them;
2. receive Him in joyful and grateful faith as they experience Him in Word and deed;
3. grow in their personal relationship with Him as they participate in His life and ministry.

Note for small-group leaders: Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 61.

For the Lecture Leader

You get to put the frosting on the cake. After that you get to put candles on it, light them, and lead the celebration. The high point of that celebration is when you serve a big slice of that delicious cake to all participants.

In a sense, they make the cake. By their individual study and small-group discussions of God’s Word, they gather the ingredients, mix them, and bake the cake. Your delightful privilege is to help them all to enjoy it. You review the content of the portion of John’s Gospel they have studied. You beautify and enrich it with additional information and interpretation. Then you invite and encourage them all to feast on it, to taste its goodness and sweetness, to take it with them into their daily lives.

That can be a very rewarding and exciting experience, if done well. And you can do it well. Those who plan and prepare this LifeLight Bible study material and the participants who use it are supporting you with prayer. You will want to approach your lecture each week fortified by your own prayer as well. One way God will answer that prayer is through your careful personal study. Be sure to work through the daily assignments thoughtfully, so that you are dealing with God’s Word in the same way that individual participants are.

Once you have done that, you are ready to prepare your lecture presentation. Your goal as you go about this is to make the material your very own by whatever method works best for you. The following procedure should be helpful.

1. *Reread the section of John* on which your presentation is based, asking the Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart so that you discover in these verses everything He wants you and the others to have.
2. *Read through the entire lecture presentation* in this leaders guide in a single sitting, without stopping to underline or make notes. This will give you a sense of the whole discussion.
3. *Reread the lecture*, this time very slowly, underlining a few of the most important points in each section and making brief notes that summarize the main thoughts.
4. *Restate the lecture in your own words*, if at all possible. Either rewrite the lecture completely or prepare an outline from which you can give your own version.
5. *Prepare for delivery* by saying your lecture aloud, going over each section several times, and referring to your notes as little as possible. Then, after reviewing your notes or manuscript, practice saying the whole thing several times. As much as possible, say it from memory and from your heart in your own words and way, with as much eye contact as possible. Be enthusiastic, personal, and concerned about your hearers, rather than about yourself and how well or how poorly you might be doing.
6. *If you choose to read the printed lecture*, practice reading

it aloud until you can do it comfortably and naturally, making whatever word changes are necessary. For ideas on how to emphasize and express things in the printed lecture, listen to the cassette tape for this course available from CPH. If some small groups meet at other times during the week, provide them with an audio recording of your presentation or the cassette mentioned above.

7. *Get feedback* from a few participants whose judgment you value. Ask them for suggestions that will enable you to do an even better job.

8. *Use an overhead projector.* This is a wonderful teaching aid. It helps you to get your message across, reinforces it visually, and maintains the interest of your hearers. If you are not accustomed to using an overhead, consult with a pastor or a teacher for hints on making the best use of it.

Session Plan

Worship

Begin the session with the hymn and prayer printed in the study leaflet. Accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Worship* (refer to hymnal index). Note: Concordia Publishing House has available *Every Voice a Song*, a 9-CD set of organ accompaniments for 180 hymns and liturgy. All the initial worship hymns in the LifeLight courses are included in this resource. It's especially helpful for mission congregations and small parishes. See the list of study resources on page 7.

Lecture Presentation

1 The Prologue Is the Key That Unlocks the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John is a marvelous part of Scripture—beautiful, rich, moving—if you open it up with the key provided by the author in the opening verses. Verses 1–18 of chapter 1 are that key, usually called the prologue. In these verses the author offers us some vital information about the person whose story he is about to tell—who this person is, why He came, and how we should react to Him.

2 The Author Is Jesus' Best Friend

Before we consider this important introductory material, it will help us to know who the author of this Gospel is. Of course, in the highest sense of the term, the author is God. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God gave John the thoughts and words as well as the desire to write. However, when the Spirit caused the biblical authors to write, He worked through their personalities, experiences, and interests. So, it is important for us to know something about the human author as well.

How interesting and even exciting to know that the John who wrote this Gospel was Jesus' best friend! There are five references in this book to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Important Christian leaders writing soon after the New Testament age identified him as the one who wrote this Gospel. He is the brother of James and the son of Zebedee. James and John, along with Peter, were the inner circle of the Twelve. Peter, James, and John were often the only disciples with Jesus on special occasions—the raising of Jairus's daughter, the transfiguration, and the Maundy Thursday night of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Of these three, John was the one to whom Jesus felt drawn most strongly in personal friendship.

Many details in the Gospel indicate that its author was someone very close to Jesus and was personally involved in the events he describes. That person was almost certainly John. John and his brother James were fishermen from the vicinity of Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. **If available, indicate these places on a map.** They were partners in this business with Simon Peter and Andrew.

Not long after his first meeting with Jesus, John returned to his home and to his job, fishing in Galilee. There he and Jesus met again. This time Jesus called John, James, Peter, and Andrew to be His disciples. They left their boats and nets and families, and for the next three years they were His inseparable companions.

Why did Jesus and John become best friends? The Bible doesn't answer that question. There is no reason to believe that John was any better than the other disciples. Like the rest of the disciples, John was usually slow to understand the meaning of what Jesus said and did.

And yet, there was something about him that Jesus appreciated and enjoyed. Jesus was a real human being—like you and me. It's not always easy to understand and explain why people become good friends. In some cases, it is because they are much alike. In other cases, it is because they are so different. Opposites can attract, and that may be the case with Jesus and John. When John refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," this does not mean that Jesus loved him *more* than the other disciples, but rather that He loved him *differently*—as a friend.

The result is that we have an opportunity to get better acquainted with Jesus with the help of His best friend. John wrote many years after Jesus' ascension into heaven. Since his readers already had the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, John emphasized teachings and activities of Jesus *not* covered in these earlier writings. We can imagine Christian people 50 or 60 years after Jesus' time saying, "John, you knew Him better than anyone else. You were His best friend. Tell us what He said and did as *you* remember it and as *you* experienced it." Moved by the Holy Spirit, John wrote this amazing account of the life and work of his best friend.

3 John Uses Simple Terms with Deep Meaning

John, in his writing style, uses simple picture language to convey deep meaning. We run across many of these little words that express big ideas already in the first verses of the prologue. John is telling us about a person, isn't he? Verse 2—"He was with God"; verse 3—"Through Him all things were made." Then look down to verse 10—"He was in the world." And in verse 17 John gives us His name: Jesus Christ.

Notice the terms John uses to describe Jesus. Jesus is called (v. 1) "the Word" and (v. 9) "the true light." In verse 4 John declares, "In Him was life." These are common, simple terms, but exactly what are they telling us about Jesus? Verses 1-2—Let's start with the first descriptive term. Jesus is the Word, the Word who was with God in the beginning, the Word who *was* God. And then in verse 14 we are told that this Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.

4 The Messenger Is the Message and the Sender!

What is a word, any word? In a way, a word that you speak or write is something of *you* sent to someone else. Jesus is the Word of God, John explains. God wants to say something important to us human beings, and He is saying it through Jesus. However, Jesus is more than the messenger. He is also the *message*. Not only what Jesus said, but everything that He did and experienced tells us about God. However, the full truth is even more remarkable than this. Verse 2—Jesus is not only God's messenger and God's message, He is also God Himself—the *sender* of the messenger and the message: "The Word was God."

In what sense is Jesus God? In verse 34 John the Baptist identifies Him as the Son of God. In 3:16 Jesus refers to Himself as "God's one and only Son," (3:13) who was sent from heaven (3:17) to save the world. Although all believers are God's children, Jesus is God's Son in a unique way. Verse 2—He has been God's Son from all eternity, "was with God in the beginning." A human son comes from his parents and comes after them. God's Son always was. When the term *Son* is applied to Him, it describes a relationship rather than His origin, for God's Son had no beginning. As a human being He had a beginning when He was conceived and born, but as God's Son He always existed.

A child is a completely separate being from his or her parent. God's Son and the heavenly Father are one being (10:30): "I and the Father are one." And yet, there is a difference, a distinction between them. The Son and the Father talk to each other (12:27; 17:1-26). The Father loves the Son (Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) and the Son obeys the Father (John 15:10). So, although they are one being, they are two persons who relate to each other and communicate with each other. This is one of the ways in which God is much more complex than we human beings are. Each of us is just one person. God is three persons—Father, Son, and (to make it even more interesting and challenging!) Holy Spirit as well. One God in three persons—that's what we mean when we describe God as the Holy Trinity.

Something important to keep in mind is that in each person we meet the whole Godhead (14:9): "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father," Jesus explains.

And He adds (16:12–15) that the Spirit will share the blessings of both Son and Father with those to whom He speaks.

All this is rather difficult to understand and explain, but it is also important. Unless we recognize both plurality (three-ness) in God as well as unity (one-ness), much of what we are told in this Gospel will be very confusing.

5 God Communicates by Becoming One of Us

Just think about this for a moment. The almighty God, the mind and power behind the entire universe, wants to communicate with us human beings. He wants us to get to know Him. He wants to share His feelings and hopes and dreams for us. He has some important things to tell us—important to Him as well as to us. Because they are important, He came in person to speak to us and He came as one of us. The man Jesus is God communicating with us in person as a human being like ourselves. If you want to know about God, if you want to know God personally, John is telling us, look at the man Jesus. Listen to Him. He is the living Word of God. Verse 14—“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” Without in any way giving up His deity, His divine nature, and without becoming sinful, God became a real human being—as human as you and I.

6 Jesus' Communication Reveals and Conceals

While in the world in human flesh and form, Jesus lived life on the same terms that we do, without any special privileges or protection. Most of the time He did not use His divine powers. When He did use them to perform miracles, it was never for His own convenience or advantage. Rather, His actions were done to help people and make them aware of God's great love for them.

Verse 14—“We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father.” Verse 18—“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known.” When Jesus spoke and performed miracles, especially when He died and rose again, people recognized the power and love of God in Him. That is what the term *glory* means. It is the presence and compassion of God in a tangible and visible form.

God revealed Himself clearly and beautifully in the man Jesus. But strangely enough, in a certain sense He also concealed Himself—because He came as a true human being. Our sinful pride asks, “How can we accept this helpless baby of Bethlehem—this carpenter's son who grew up among us—as God Himself, come to save us?” Also today: “How can it be that through the simple water of Baptism and the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper we receive His forgiveness?” During Jesus' earthly life and ministry, as well as today, people can and do reject Him and refuse to see God in Him.

Jesus is the light of God shining in the darkness of this world. He can drive away the darkness of our ignorance. He can overcome the blindness of our unbelief. However, we are free to turn toward the darkness, close our eyes to the light, and choose not to recognize Him. For us to recognize God in Jesus and to trust Him requires a miracle of revelation and conversion. But we can—and by nature do—always refuse Him by ourselves. Thank God, then, for the miracle of conversion, by which God's own Spirit turned our hearts from unbelief to faith and led us to “receive” Him and thereby become children of God. 1 Corinthians 12:3: For “no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

7 The Heart of the Message: God Loves Us

What is it that God is saying to us through Jesus? The answer is encouraging. The heart of the message is that God loves us more than we ever imagined, even though we don't deserve His love. All that Jesus said, did, and endured conveys this good news. Verse 17—“Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

Grace is love that helps those who are unlovable. Grace is patience and care for those who are disobedient and disappointing. Grace is generously forgiving and doing good to those who actually ought to be punished.

In the Ten Commandments, which God gave through Moses, God tells His redeemed people how they are to live. Because of our sin, we do not live up to God's standard. Through Moses and other Old Testament writers He also promised to rescue us from the consequences of our sin. God kept those promises when Jesus came. That's what the term *truth* means in John's Gospel—God's faithfulness to His promises. This helps us to understand verse 17: “For the law was given through

Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." In other words, God loves us even though our sins offend Him. He loves us and deals with our sinfulness through Jesus, just as He promised He would.

8 The Purpose of God's Communication Is a Close Personal Relationship

As we get to know God better through Jesus, we will appreciate Him more, respect Him more, and trust Him more. Through Jesus, God shows Himself to be like an incredibly kind man or woman of great resources who approaches a group of corrupted and degraded street youth. They have no future, no hope. But this person in love approaches them and says, "I care about you and want to help you. I can take you out of all this. If you will let me, I will adopt you as my children with all the advantages and privileges that this involves." Jesus establishes and sustains a close personal relationship with God, a beautiful parent-child relationship.

Then in verse 4 John says, "In Him was life and that life was the light of men." *Life*, as used by John, refers to the condition of a human being in a personal, saving relationship with God. In Jesus, God creates and nourishes this life.

As we walk with Jesus, listen to Him, and talk with Him in this study of John's Gospel, expect it to happen. Look forward to it eagerly. Enjoy the prospect and the experience of a closer, more meaningful faith relationship with God through this remarkable person whom John presents to us.

Concluding Activities

Offer a prayer asking God to bless the study of all those who are participating in this LifeLight course. Pray that God would guide and bless the efforts of all those who are serving as leaders.

Make any necessary announcements. Distribute the enrichment magazine and encourage participants to read it as part of their weekly study. Then distribute study leaflet 2.

Notes

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Notes

Introducing the Messenger

John 1:19–2:25

Preparing for the Session

Central Focus

At first Jesus is introduced by others, and then He introduces Himself.

Objectives

That participants, by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word,

1. realize that then and now Jesus chooses to be introduced by others;
2. accept the high privilege of directing others to Him;
3. are attentive and responsive when others direct them to Jesus;
4. eagerly anticipate personal encounters with God as they study and share Jesus through the Gospel of John;
5. because of their faith relationship with Jesus, recognize God's love at work in His creation in both ordinary and miraculous ways;
6. respond with humility and contrition when the loving God expresses judgment on them for their sins.

Note for small-group leaders: Lesson notes and other materials you will need begin on page 65.

For the Lecture Leader

How did your first presentation go? Probably you experienced some anxiety and disappointment. You may also have experienced the excitement of having God's Word come alive for you and for your hearers.

In order to keep improving, it is important to evaluate each presentation. Review in your own mind what went well and try to figure out why. Analyze the attention patterns of your hearers. During what parts of your pre-

sentation did they seem most interested? How did they react to your use of the overhead projector? How smoothly and comfortably did you use this teaching aid? Were you able to maintain good eye contact? Did you express things in your own words?

Obviously, questions like these will also help you discover and understand what did not go well. As you identify things that need to be fixed, don't be too hard on yourself. It was your first presentation in this series. Even very experienced, professional presenters keep noticing things that they could do better. Be confident that God's Spirit accomplishes great things through even our imperfect efforts.

Discuss the presentation with your feedback person or group. Start with the positives. Ask for comments about things that were most effective and why they seemed to be effective. Also ask for suggestions for improvement. Try not to be hurt or defensive about these suggestions. You asked for them, and they are being offered in order to help you.

Then, as you prepare your next lesson, try to do even better the things that went well last time. In other words, keep building on your strengths. Of course, you will also want to address weaknesses.

Pick out one or two of these that seem most important and most easily corrected, and do your best to improve there. Don't try to fix everything at once.

Above all, approach your study of this new portion of John's Gospel with eager anticipation. Follow the preparation steps recommended last week. Remember that your high privilege is to introduce Jesus to your hearers. They already know Him, but you can help them to meet Him again, to gain fresh, new insights into who He is, what He has done, and what He means to them. As you study and teach about Him, you will meet Jesus in person yourself. Your faith in Him and your love for Him will grow. He will mean more to you than ever before.

For the Director

Here's a checklist for you:

- Make sure study leaflets for the next session (session 3) are handed out at the end of this session.
- Attendance taking, a procedure for collecting funds to pay for study materials, and training and feedback sessions for other LifeLight leaders should also be in place by this time.
- Make sure that small-group leaders of the home groups are using good quality tape players for the taped lectures.
- Listen for any problems the other leaders may be encountering so they can be remedied quickly.
- Remember to pray for LifeLight leaders each day.

Session Plan

Worship

Begin the session with the hymn and prayer printed in the study leaflet. Accompaniments are available in denominational hymnals, such as *Lutheran Worship* (refer to hymnal index), or on the *Every Voice a Song* CD set.

Lecture Presentation

1 Introduction: God's Son, His Living Word, Needed to Be Introduced

When God's Son became a human being, He lived in this world for 30 years, and only a few people (His parents; shepherds at His birth; Wise men; Simeon and Anna) realized who He was! When it was time for Him to begin His public ministry, He had to be introduced. No doubt because of His sinlessness and devotion to the Father and His love for people, others realized that He was quite special, but they didn't realize how special. You see, up to this point (age 30) Jesus had never used His divine powers. He performed no miracles, did no preaching or teaching. Jesus' deity was hidden by His humanity. Friends and acquaintances, even close relatives, did not know that He was the eternal Son of God in human flesh.

Even during His public ministry, when He spoke and acted with the power of God, Jesus did so with restraint. People could choose not to recognize God in Him. That is also true today. By now it is far more evident than it was then that He is the God and Savior of all people. He has made this known through His death for our sins, His victorious resurrection, the sending of His Spirit, and the remarkable spread of His church. However, clear and convincing as all this is, people can still ignore Him or reject Him.

That is why at the beginning of His ministry, and even today, God's messenger, Jesus, needs to be introduced. He relies on those who have recognized Him and believed in Him to direct others to Him.

2 John the Baptist Introduces Jesus (1:19–36)

The first one to introduce Jesus publicly as the promised Savior was a very remarkable person himself. He was a cousin of Jesus, born miraculously to his parents in their old age. From the day of his birth, he had been designated as the one who would prepare the way for the Christ. Most of his life had been spent in the desert, where God strengthened and shaped him specifically for his vital role.

John the Baptist had a striking appearance and powerful message. With long, shaggy hair and beard and rough camel's hair clothing, he wandered around the area near the Dead Sea preaching to whoever would listen: "Get ready, the Christ is near, confess your sins and accept the cleansing of baptism. Anyone who is not ready when He comes will receive terrible judgment." Although he preached in the desert, his fame spread. So impressive was he that many began to think that John himself was the promised one. Verse 19—When representatives of the Jewish leaders approached John, they wanted to know whether he was the Christ. Immediately and emphatically John denied being either the Christ or any of the Old Testament prophets who were expected to appear prior to His coming. "You don't know Him," John informed them, "but He is already here. He is the great one. I am only His lowly servant."

How do you suppose John felt about answering that way? He had been the center of attention and was a celebrity to whom people were drawn magnetically. He could have become the head of a powerful movement.

However, instead of accepting that kind of attention and expectations for himself, John discouraged them and directed their hopes to another.

Later, perhaps that same day, Jesus came to John to be baptized. John was confused by this. Although he did not know for sure, he apparently suspected that his cousin Jesus was the promised Savior. But, if He were that, why would He need to be baptized? Baptism was for sinners. The Christ could not be a sinner. Jesus insisted that John baptize Him, and it was then that it happened. God had given John a sign by which he would be able to identify the Christ with certainty. The sign was that the Spirit would come down on Him in the form of a dove.

While Jesus was being baptized John saw this happen. Then, as if that were not enough, he also heard the Father's voice from heaven say (Matthew 3:17), "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."

Then, the very next day while they were talking, John saw Jesus walking toward them. "This is the one I was telling you about," he exclaimed. "Since we talked yesterday, God showed me that He is the one whom we are waiting for. Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

This way of referring to the Christ must have surprised these Jews. They thought of the promised Savior as a conquering king, not as a sacrificial lamb. They expected Him to save them, the Jews, not the whole world. But John had it right. His introduction of Jesus was absolutely on target. God's Son came to save everyone, and He would do it by giving Himself into a sacrificial death on the cross. Apparently, those to whom John first introduced Jesus reacted negatively. For they soon became enemies, determined to kill Jesus.

One day later John the Baptist introduced two of his own disciples to Jesus—Andrew and another. Andrew is specifically mentioned in verse 40. Since John (the author) was a close associate of Andrew and gives such a full description of what happened, we assume that he was the unnamed disciple mentioned in verses 35–37. Even though it meant that they would leave him to be with Jesus, John the Baptist pointed his two disciples to Jesus, and they now left John and attached themselves to Jesus.

John the Baptist is a beautiful example of how all of us

can and should introduce others to Jesus. By what we say and do, we want to call the attention of others to this great messenger of God. We want them to realize who He is and what He has done, and then accept Him by faith. The faithful witness will say as John did, "I'm not the one you need. Jesus is. Follow Him."

3 A Chain Reaction: New Followers Introduce Others to Jesus (1:37–51)

These new followers, in turn, introduced others to Jesus. In time, they introduced others, and then still others, and so on and on down through the ages until we were also brought to Jesus. When we were baptized or brought to faith by the witness of a Christian friend, we were introduced to Jesus. Now it is our high privilege and responsibility to keep that chain reaction going, to keep introducing new people to Jesus. Then those people will introduce others and so on and on until Christ returns.

Andrew's experience with Jesus is fascinating. When John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said to Andrew and the other disciple (probably John), "Look, the Lamb of God," they fell in step right behind Him and spent the rest of the day with Him. As they became acquainted with Him and listened to Him, Andrew realized that this new friend whom John called "the Lamb of God" was the Messiah (that is, the Christ, the promised Savior). Andrew was overwhelmed. For many hundreds of years, in fact since Adam and Eve fell into sin, God's people had been waiting for this person, this Messiah, to come. And now He was here. His name was Jesus. Andrew knew Him personally.

He could not wait to share this wonderful news, and he started with his own brother and business partner, Simon. Verses 41–42: "The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus." That is the place for all of us to start, with those nearest and dearest to us. First we should approach those among our families, friends, acquaintances, business associates, or others who do not know Jesus and introduce them to Him. The good news of Christ flows most effectively through our close personal relationships.

Introducing his brother Simon to Jesus may be the most important service Andrew ever rendered. He seems to

have been a very ordinary person of modest abilities. And yet, the brother whom he introduced to Jesus became an outstanding Christian leader of great boldness and lasting influence, someone who brought thousands to Jesus. You and I can find a great deal of encouragement in this. We, like Andrew, may be quite ordinary. However, God may use us to bring to Jesus others who will be extraordinary in their service to Him.

The chain reaction continues. Soon after His contact with Andrew, Jesus met a friend of Andrew named Philip. Probably Andrew had also said something to Philip about Jesus and had told Jesus about Philip. For when Jesus was about to leave Judea and return to His home in Galilee, he looked up Philip and invited him to come along.

Philip accepted the invitation without hesitation. Before beginning that journey to Galilee, which was also Philip's home, Philip visited with Jesus and discovered for himself who He was.

Full of excitement over his discovery, Philip eagerly looked up his friend Nathanael and told him the good news. Verse 45: "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Friend introducing friend—that's the way saving faith is spread most naturally.

Nathanael was skeptical. He couldn't imagine anyone so important coming out of insignificant Nazareth. But Philip insisted that Nathanael come and meet Jesus in person before deciding against Him. When they met, Nathanael was overwhelmed. Jesus greeted him as though He already knew him. He referred to Nathanael's skeptical response in a friendly, almost amused way. In effect, Jesus said, "You say what you think, don't you, Nathanael? And apparently you are not impressed by what you hear about Me."

Nathanael couldn't understand how Jesus knew what he said or how he felt before they ever met. Jesus added to his astonishment when He explained that He saw him sitting in the shade of a fig tree before Philip found him. This was apparently quite a distance away and would have required the use of divine power.

That did it! Verse 49—Nathanael's skepticism collapsed, and he made a marvelous confession of faith: "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." Jesus

accepted his statement of faith, but in a loving and amused way chided him for his initial skepticism. "You haven't seen anything yet, Nathanael. Wait till you see heaven open and angels coming back and forth on Me."

We may find skepticism, too, in those whom we want to introduce to Jesus. But a first negative reaction doesn't mean someone will always feel that way. Philip's way of handling skepticism and resistance was effective. He didn't argue with Nathanael. He simply repeated his invitation. "Don't take my word for it. Meet Him yourself and then decide."

4 Jesus Introduces Himself as Lord of Creation (2:1–11)

Up to this point Jesus relied on others to make Him known. Now the time had come for Jesus to make Himself known, and He chose to do this with actions. So that people could realize that He was God's Son and the promised Savior, Jesus began to do things that only God could do.

Soon after, Jesus and His new friends returned to Galilee. **If available and convenient, refer to a map.** There they were invited to a big wedding party, where a serious problem arose. The wine ran out. The celebration had hardly begun when the servants ran out of the only beverage they had to serve. The bride and groom and their families could have been thoroughly humiliated.

For some reason, when the servants realized what had happened, they shared this information with Jesus' mother, Mary. Or, maybe she overheard the servants as they were discussing it. Verse 3—In any case, Mary told Jesus, "They have no more wine." Better than anyone else, she knew who Jesus was. But He had never performed a miracle before. Did she expect Him to do one now? Verse 4—Jesus' response is rather puzzling. "Dear woman, why do you involve Me? . . . My time has not yet come." In other words, "What am I supposed to do about this? Do you really think that this is My big chance to show who I am?" His comment to His mother sounds almost disrespectful, like a put-down. But Mary didn't take it that way. She turned to the servants and said, "I don't know what He may ask you to do, but whatever it is, do it!"

Jesus did ask them to do something. Pointing to six

huge stone jars, each holding 20 or 30 gallons, He said, "Fill those jars with water and then take some of it to the man in charge of the banquet." When the master of the banquet tasted it he was astonished and a bit angry. He called the bridegroom over and said: "What is this? Where have you been hiding this good stuff? We should have served this first and saved the cheaper wine until now when the guests have already had some and are no longer so particular."

God's Son performed His first miracle. He did something that only God could do—He turned water into wine! He had shared in the work of creation (1:3) at the beginning of time when the world was made. Now He takes control of a small part of that creation (180 gallons of water) and, without touching it or even saying a word, quietly changes it into delicious wine. In this way He introduced Himself as God's Son and the Lord of creation.

However, only a few of the many people present even knew that it had happened! The servants, Mary, and the disciples knew of the miracle. It was an important experience for the disciples. As a result, they put their faith in Him. The faith begun when they first met Him down in Judea was greatly strengthened by this display of His divine glory.

From time to time Jesus also reveals Himself to us as the Lord of creation. Do we notice this when it happens? Has your food or money ever stretched farther than you expected it to? Have you or has anyone close to you ever recovered from sickness or injury in a surprising way? Have you ever been headed for a disastrous automobile accident and then at the last second missed it by inches? When things like this happen to us, we often just breathe a sigh of relief and go on. But these experiences are too important for that. If we bother to notice, we will recognize our Lord's divine glory in them. He shows that He is the Lord of glory in our lives too.

5 Jesus Introduces Himself as the Lord of the Temple (2:12–22)

In the next scene we see Jesus in quite a different setting. With His disciples He makes the journey south again. If available, indicate on map. They go to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover. All Jewish men were required to be at the temple in Jerusalem for this occasion.

When Jesus came into the temple with His disciples, He acted as though He owned the place. Merchants and money changers had filled the temple court to sell to the worshipers—at sky-high prices—animals and birds for sacrifices. The place was noisy and smelly. How could people worship God properly in the midst of all these distractions? Jesus became angry and decided to do something about it. He made a whip out of ropes and drove them out with all their livestock.

He upset their tables and scattered their coins. And He did all this with such confidence and authority that no one tried to resist Him. Verse 16—"Get these out of here!" He said. "How dare you turn My Father's house into a market!"

By this startling public protest Jesus indicates that He is the Lord of the temple, because He is the Son of the God whose temple it is. Although they did not resist His bold action, some disputed the bold claim. They demanded a miraculous sign to prove that He had the authority to say and do these things. Verse 19—Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They couldn't believe their ears. It had taken 46 years to build the temple, and He said He would rebuild it in three days? Nonsense! But He was talking about the temple of His body.

In just a few years He was going to offer His body as the sacrifice for the sins of all people. All the animal sacrifices performed in the temple day after day and year after year were a shadow and a promise of the great, final, completely effective sacrifice that Jesus would become on the cross. Remember (1:29), John the Baptist introduced Him as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." Here Jesus suggests that as the Lord of the temple, He Himself will finally take the place of that temple as the focus of the worship of God's people. He will die as the Sacrifice to end all sacrifices—and then rise again to prove that He is all that He claimed to be.

In our worship today as we study His Word and receive His Supper, we meet this same Jesus. He visits our "temples" too. Often He is disturbed by what He finds. Much goes on to distract from our communication with Him and strains our relationship with Him. He comes with judgment for all of this. But, above all, He comes with mercy. He says, "I have paid for your sins with the sacrifice of Myself. I will not hold them against you. I want

to be closer to you. I want our friendship to grow. I want to be the most important person and the most important influence in your life." It is an offer too good to refuse.

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Concluding Activities

Ask participants to take a moment to think of one person to whom they might introduce their Savior. Then ask each person to pray silently, asking the Holy Spirit to help them introduce Jesus to that person.

Make any necessary announcements, briefly mention again the resources in the enrichment magazine, and distribute study leaflet 3.

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Notes