



# FOLLOW ME

## Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John

Session 1  
“In the Beginning”:  
Jesus at the Center

The Prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18) provides the basis for the first session of this Bible Study. Dr. Edward Sri asks, “What view does each of us have of God?” Since Jesus came for each of us, what do we do? What place do we make for God in our lives?

Dr. Sri uses the analogy of hiking the Colorado 14’s; the mountains that are 14,000 ft. or higher. The hike is arduous; as one climbs above the tree line, thinking the top is close only to have it become a false summit, the exhilaration at the panoramic view stretching below is the most powerful aspect of this form of incredible exertion. Dr. Sri affirms that John’s Gospel offers the same spiritual challenge of a whole new view of God; a different perspective of where we go and how we get there than what we might find in the rest of the New Testament.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew invites us into the Jewish synagogue, as he connects the predictions of the Old Testament scriptures to the exciting unfurling of the miraculous New Testament. Paul, from his strong Jewish educational background, invites us into the university classroom for scholarly debates. Mark offers a short, concise handbook type of Gospel. Physician Luke shares from the cultured Greek world viewpoint of his time.

How does John frame his gospel perspective? From the mountain top, he enralls us with the view of God that whets our appetite to see the view of God forever. Dr. Sri mentions that since John wrote the last Gospel, he filled in the gaps by sharing stories not yet disclosed, and after great prayer and extensive preaching, he became our poet, mystic, and lover, who shows us just how limitless God’s love for us truly is. John leaned into Jesus at the Last Supper, and stood at the foot of His cross. John loved Jesus by being close to Him.

Dr. Sri explained three keys that unlock the mystery and beauty of John’s Gospel:

1. **THE SETTING** or **THE STAGE** is the initial key—the background for the story that is about to take place. The other gospel writers introduced their writings along the Biblical timeline; but John goes to the very beginning in verses 1-5, “In the beginning”; John is alluding to Creation at the beginning of the book of Genesis; then he addresses the inner life of God, “The Word was with God, and the Word was God”; and through the Prologue of the first 18 verses, we experience the climax in 1:14, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Jesus IS our eternal word, in Deity becoming human. In the past, God dwelt or shared His holy presence in the cloud for the wandering Israelites, and in the Jerusalem temple.

2. **THE SIGNS OR MIRACLES THAT DISCLOSE WHO JESUS IS, WHAT HIS MISSION IS, AND HIS IDENTITY.** In chapters 1-11 (called the *Book of Signs*),

there are six miracles that include changing water into wine at Cana (2:1-11), the healing of the royal official’s son (4:46-54), the healing of the paralytic (5:1-9), feeding the 5,000 with the loaves (6:1-14), healing of the man born blind (9:1-41), and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:17-44). Chapters 1-11 encompass the Book of Signs.

The second half of John’s Gospel leads to the seventh sign that covers chapters 12-21, which is called *The Book of Glory*. This is the miracle of the manifestation of God’s great love for us; the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

3. **THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS CHRIST.** No other faith offers believers a divinity made flesh, God becoming man, as John provides seven I AM statements. The Jewish faith perceived “I AM” to mean Yahweh, or GOD. Take this opportunity to read the following in your Bible: John 6:35, “I am the bread of life”; John 8:12, “I am the light of the world”; John 10:7, “I am the gate of the sheep”; John 10:11, “I am the good shepherd”; John 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life”; John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”; and John 15:1, “I am the true vine.” It seems that we have two choices: 1) I can decide I do not like all of God’s ideas in respecting myself and others in a Godly way, so I choose to retain my “Church of Me,” or I can I can make God the center of my life, as I spend the rest of my life trying to imitate Jesus’ way of life.



AN APOLOGETIC EXPLANATION OF  
**EARLY CHRISTOLOGICAL HERESIES**

*What were some heresies in the early Church concerning Christ?*

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything that was made. . . .**

**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father. (Jn 1:1–3, 14)**

**[Jesus] asked his disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mt 16:13–16)**



In the early centuries of Christianity, as the Church wrestled with fully understanding the identity of Christ, the Magisterium had to confront a number of heresies that challenged Christ’s humanity and divinity. The Church teaches as a matter of dogma that Christ is true God and true man, but it took centuries for the Magisterium to formulate this teaching in theological language. Several false teachings, or heresies, arose that created confusion and required an official response. (Cf. CCC 464)

Among the early heresies were the following:

- ✘ *Docetism* claimed that Christ was pure spirit and that his physical body was an illusion. They held that Christ did not truly die on the Cross but merely the illusion of his body. The Catholic Church has always taught that Christ was “incarnate of the Virgin Mary, / and became man” (Nicene Creed) and that “Christ’s death was a real death” (CCC 627).
- ✘ *Arianism* claimed that Jesus was a highly exalted creation of God the Father but not eternal or consubstantial with the Father. The First Ecumenical Council of Nicæa (AD 325) affirmed a response that Christ was “begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father” (Nicene Creed), i.e., of the same *substance*, or *nature*, or *essence*, as the Father. (Cf. CCC 465)
- ✘ *Nestorianism* taught that Christ’s human nature was loosely joined to the divine nature of the Son of God. The Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (AD 431) refuted this by clarifying that Christ possesses two natures, human and divine, and that these natures were fully united in his divine Person from his conception in what we call the hypostatic union. (Cf. CCC 466)
- ✘ *Monophysitism* taught that Christ’s humanity was absorbed into his divinity, leaving him with either a divine nature alone or some new mixture of mostly divine and a small part of human nature. The Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon rebutted this heresy (AD 451); later, the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (AD 533) made further clarifications to the teaching. (Cf. CCC 467–468)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* addresses this question in paragraph 464.