

Aim of lesson

To see John's aim in writing the gospel, and for the class to consider how they might benefit from studying it.

Bible background

John 20:30-31; John 1:1-18; John 3:16-17; 1 John 1:1-4

Outline of lesson

These things are written that

Since this is the first lesson, it is a good idea to introduce the plan for studying the gospel of John. You may like to ask the class if they know who John was and why they think he wrote the gospel. Let them then look up John 20:30-31 and think about the words, then fill in the first box in the workbook. Encourage them to see the application to themselves, that is, 'these things were written that we or I may believe ...

Now look at John 3:16-17, and discuss with the class God's aim (that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life), and his reason for giving the Lord Jesus (because he 'so loved the world'). Now compare the aims of God and of John. There are several points in common.

Now discuss with the class how they might benefit from thinking about the gospel. Each one wants us to believe in Jesus, as Son of God, and thereby have life.

You may like to make mini-posters of everyone's aim and keep them up on the wall during the rest of the session. Bright squares of fluorescent paper would be effective for this. Do not forget to include God's aim.

The Word made flesh

John's first step towards achieving his aim is to show Jesus is the Word of God in a human being. To introduce the idea of communicating by means other than the written or spoken word, ask one of the class to mime something to the rest. It may help to speed things along if you have what is to be mimed written on cards. Simple, quick, mimes can be done for such things as: 'come here', 'stop', 'goodbye', or more complicated mimes for events, characters, etc.

Ask the class if they have heard of the saying 'Actions speak louder than words'. Do they think it is true? Can they think of any examples? For examples, a gift of chocolates or flowers to say you are thinking of someone, or cleaning up your room rather than just saying you will do it. Explain that in the same way, all that Jesus did and said is the clearest statement of what God wants to say.

What does God say about himself in

Ask the class to fill in the next part of the workbook, thinking about what God says in creation, in the law of Moses and in his Son. It will need to be very brief; just one thought for each. For example, that God is all powerful; that he cares about what we do; and that he loves us. This should help the class to see how God says something about himself and his thoughts and values in everything he does, and how the Lord Jesus is the fullest expression of 'the Word of God'. Even though the phrase "the Word of God" can be used of other things.

God seen in word and action

If you have time and would like the class to think in greater depth about the opening of John's gospel, you may like to get them to answer in a few sentences the following questions:

1. When did God first speak to men? (in creation)
2. Did God send a message and then go away and do something else? (God has made sure that these things were written down and have reached us)
3. What do we learn about God from everything that he said? (We learn about his character – his love of beauty and his care for his creation).
4. Has God ever made or done anything which does not show his real character? (Everything God does is consistent with his nature and his purpose).

If you put together on a large sheet all the sentences in answer to (1) and then all the answers to (2) etc, you will have John 1:1-3 expanded in the class' own words. It may read something like this:

"God has always spoken to men from the beginning of creation. He did not just send messages and then go away and do something else; he was with his message and made sure it got through to us, giving miracles and signs to prove that it was his message. Everything God said, in actions and words, tells more about God himself – more about his character and his way of thinking. God has never made or done anything that is not part of his message about himself to us."

Read together with the class John 1:1-3 or 1-5.

The glory of God

Read together and discuss John 1:14, encouraging the class to see:

- All that God is and wants us to know about himself is seen in Jesus.
- That Jesus is the Son of God in as real a way as he is the son of Mary.
- That we see the greatness and the glory of God in Jesus, that is, his grace (mercy and forgiveness) and truth. The same things that were told to Moses and the prophets are seen in action in Jesus.

Digging deeper

The other John

This section is a study of John the Baptist: his life and purpose.

Relevance to our lives

Ask the class if they think that we also can be the word of God in human form. Ask them each to think, during the next week, of one specific thing that they think God would like them to do as a message from him to another person.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you that you loved us so much that you sent your Son. Help us to see your greatness in all his actions and words.

Other suggestions for activities

1. John 1:15-28 could be dramatised to show John the Baptist's preparation for the coming of the Messiah.
2. Jesus, the Saviour from God (Praise the Lord 66) could be learned and discussed. The words deal in a remarkable way with the theme of the revelation of God in Christ, and the way in which this can, by God's grace, be extended to us.