

- Rev. Grant Mangold, www.RiversideChurchIowa.com

THE WORD OF LIFE

First things first. Your parents and teachers taught you this wise concept. It certainly holds up in the Gospel of John - one of the historical records of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Because of its practical powerful message, we begin today a new series on this book of the New Testament of the Bible.

The Gospel of John contains some of the most beautiful and profound writings in existence - an eloquent testimony to ancient revealed truths. If you grasp the essential message of the prologue of this Gospel, you have the keys or outline to the whole book - and important truths to live by - which transform your life. First, Jesus is God; second, Jesus became like you; and third, you can become like Jesus. Let's explore these statements - and make this weighty theology accessible and applicable to your own life.

The prologue to John's gospel, verses 1-18, form the shape of a cross. It opens with powerful, haunting, beloved words: "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***" This verse is a deliberate echo of Genesis 1, speaking of the beginning of all things.

The "Word" in New Testament *koine* Greek is "logos" - a term ancient philosophers used to explain "reason" as the rational principle behind everything in existence and all that can be known about us and the world. Christianity and Judaism are the only religions which account for reliance on reason. All other religion, including atheism, derive from defective worldviews. Islam defines "Allah" as primarily omnipotent power and will, so "God" is unknowable in the personal sense. However, the God of the Bible, Creator of the world and author of Scripture, is both knowable and reasonable - and from Him we receive logic.

In Genesis 1:3, "*God said*" reveals the Word as the very breathed-out power of God, seen in creation, in revelation, and in salvation. Psalm 33:6 says "*by the Word of the Lord the heavens were made.*" Jeremiah 1:4 says "*the Word of the Lord came*" - speaking to and through certain human beings to reveal God and His will. Psalm 107:20 says "*God sent forth His Word and saved them*" - speaking of His salvation.

The Bible reveals that there is only One God, who exists as the "*Trinity*" - one God in three persons. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. But the Father is not the Son and not the Holy Spirit. Not only did Jesus exist before all things were made, He existed co-eternally and co-equally as God. This concept of "*first cause*" lays the foundation for understanding who we are and why we exist. If God did not have the power of self-existence in and of Himself, outside of creation, nothing else could or would exist. We are here because God willed us into existence. If God did not exist, nothing else would "BE."

1 - JESUS is your eternal Creator God. This is the first point of the prologue, and the apex of the cross-shaped verbal picture painted by the apostle John. Jesus is God, and He is your Creator. v 3 "***All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.***" Hebrews 1:2 exalts the Son of God "*through whom God created the world.*" Colossians 1:16 says of Jesus, "*by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.*" John 1:4 says "***In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.***" As Creator, Jesus is the source of your physical life, and your light - the meaning of life, both knowledge and wisdom. The Bible reveals human beings as made in the image of God, so that we can know Him and therefore know who we are and why we are here. And it reveals how to return to right relationship with our Maker - which is explained in the next two truths.

2 - JESUS became like you. v 9 says "***the true light was coming into the world***" and v 14 says "***and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.***" This is the incredible "incarnation" of Jesus, which we celebrate at Christmas - God being born as a man, to save us. This tells us God cares about His creation, and how He rescues us from our sinful situation. This concept forms the cross-beam of the cross - God's arms open wide to embrace humanity. This matters - because to God, you matter. Eternally.

3 - YOU can become like Jesus. v 12 says that "***to all who received Jesus, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God - who were born not of the flesh...but born of God.***" This forms the base of the cross, where in humility you bow before the only God - who not only made you, but re-creates us with spiritual life so that as re-born children of God, we grow up to become like Christ.

So, these 18 verses show how the Word of God brings both life and light to all who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Next time we'll explore how His coming "*in the flesh*" brings eternal hope to helpless humanity.