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## Lesson Overview

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<b>Biblical Passage</b>	John 1:1-5, 1:14, 5:31-47
<b>Supporting Passages</b>	Colossians 1:13-23, Philippians 2:5-11
<b>Memory Verse</b>	John 1:4
<b>Biblical Truth</b>	Jesus Christ, who offers eternal life to all people, is the central figure of the Bible.
<b>Context</b>	<p>In this lesson and the three that follow, students will be introduced to Jesus through prophecy and through His birth. Christ was with God from the beginning of time. When we study Scripture with this in mind, we begin to see that Christ's work is present in the entire Bible, not just the Gospels.</p>
<b>Learning Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students will examine how Scriptures from the Old and New Testaments point to Jesus as the Messiah.</li><li>• Students will begin to value Jesus as the Messiah who came to save them from their sins and give them eternal life.</li></ul>
<b>Prayer Suggestions</b>	<p>As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for your students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pray that students will clearly see Jesus as the Messiah.</li><li>• Pray that students will understand that Jesus wants them to live transformed lives.</li><li>• Pray that students will boldly proclaim Jesus as the Son of God who gives salvation from sin and death.</li></ul>

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## Biblical Commentary

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### Investigation

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John 1:1-5, 1:14 and 5:31-47 offer two of the clearest pictures of Jesus' identity found in the Bible. In chapter one, **John** wrote that in the beginning the world was created through Jesus. John's main emphasis, however, was on Jesus' incarnation. Jesus was God in the flesh, both fully human and fully God. Without the incarnation of Jesus, the rest of His story would not make sense. That may be why John began his Gospel by explaining the incarnation.

In John 5, Jesus claimed that the Scriptures testify about Him. Jesus asserted that if the Jews had truly understood the Scriptures they would have recognized His identity. Although the Jews knew Scripture pointed to the coming messiah, they didn't believe Jesus was that person. Even the Law of Moses, which the Jews held in high regard, pointed to Jesus as Messiah. Still, the Jews did not accept that testimony. Jesus, therefore, noted that Moses himself would condemn them before God.

Many New Testament writings reveal that Jesus was more than just a man. Paul said all the fullness of God dwelled within Jesus. He also said God reconciled all things to Himself through the work of Jesus (Col. 1:19-20). In Philippians, Paul wrote that even though Jesus was God, He submitted Himself to God's will and became a servant (Phil. 2:5-11). By doing so, He provided a way for all people to become right with God and experience eternal life.

### Importance

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This study is important for students because many of them may not fully understand that **Jesus is God and Savior**. Students will be introduced to this truth in John 1:1-5. John taught that Jesus existed from the beginning of time. He made all things. He was the life that became the light of the world. Students hear the name of Jesus used in many ways, and most of them have a positive regard for Him. However, many students fail to understand that Jesus is the central figure of history.

Other key truths addressed in this lesson include **Salvation is by Faith Alone** and **The Bible is God's Word**.

### Interpretation

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**John 1:1-2** The opening words of John's Gospel, "In the beginning," are the same words used in Genesis 1:1. John emphasized that Jesus was an active participant (along with the Father and the Holy Spirit) in the creation of the world.

In John's time, the Gnostics were a heretical group that tried to influence the Church and its teachings. Most

Gnostics believed anything in the physical realm was evil, whereas anything in the spiritual realm was good. Many denied the deity of Christ, saying He was simply a part of creation like everything else. On the other hand, some Gnostics believed Jesus was truly God but denied He was also human. Like many cults today, they also taught that certain people received a secret knowledge that placed them on a higher spiritual plane. For the Gnostics, this knowledge—the Greek word *gnosis* means “knowledge”—was superior to faith.

Against this background, John told his readers that Jesus is the **Word**. No other Gospel uses this term, which in Greek is *logos*. John used this common word to emphasize that Jesus, the Word, was with God before creation came into being and is also the one true God.

John emphasized Jesus’ intimacy and equality with the Father. But John presented Jesus as having a separate identity from God. The Bible presents God as three distinct Persons with different roles. Even with this diversity, the three Persons of the Trinity are one in unity and equality.

**John 1:3** John’s words were similar to those used by **Paul**, who also emphasized that “all things were created” by Jesus (Col. 1:16). Some Gnostics taught that God used several inferior divine beings to carry out the creation (which explained to them the problem of evil in the world). John countered this teaching by emphasizing that “nothing was made” except through Jesus. Everything in creation owes its existence to Jesus.

**John 1:4** Throughout John’s Gospel, John placed great emphasis on “**life**.” We usually relate this word to physical life. But it is more than a physical existence. The word *life* can also refer to a relationship with God that only some people experience. This kind of spiritual life is found in Jesus. This life is what John referred to when he stated his purpose for writing: so people might believe in Jesus Christ as God’s Son and in so doing “have life in his name” (Jn. 20:31).

John connected the ideas of life and light in verse four. The reality of sin in the world keeps humanity in darkness. As God enlightens us about salvation, we can experience the eternal, abundant life God planned for us.

**John 1:5** Since the beginning of human history, God has provided an awareness of Himself through creation. Paul wrote, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen” (Rom. 1:20). Obviously this only allows people to know God in a limited way. Still, it points to the existence of God.

God had been revealing Himself by shining light in the darkness since the beginning of creation. Yet because of the presence of sin in the world, people resisted God’s revelation. Imagine a man who lives in darkness and who, even when given a light, chooses to remain in the dark.

**John 1:14** God’s plan was to bring life to humanity through His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus became human. He took the form of flesh and bone. John did not elaborate on the details of the Word becoming flesh, but the Gospels of Matthew and Luke provide the story of Jesus’ miraculous conception and birth to a virgin.

Jesus took on human flesh and came to earth to “**make His dwelling**” among us. He did not cease to be God. Of course, He had certain limitations because of His humanity. Even so, He was as much God as He was human; He was fully God and fully man.

John’s emphasis on the glory of God recalls how the Lord appeared in the form of a cloud in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34) and later in the Temple (1 Kgs. 8:10). Though God’s glory was awesome in the form of a cloud, it was more incredible in the form of a man—the God-man, Jesus Christ.

**John 5:31-32** Jesus was God even though the Jewish leaders refused to believe Him. Still, in the first century, for Jesus to testify on His own behalf was the same as a defendant serving as his own eyewitness in a trial—it

was not considered a valid testimony. Yet Jesus stated that another, most likely God the Father, could offer testimony about Him.

**John 5:33-35** In addition to the Father's testimony, John the Baptist also bore witness about Jesus. When the Jewish leaders questioned John about his own identity, John testified about Jesus as the Son of God (Jn. 1:19-34). Despite John's statement, Jesus did not depend on the testimony of human beings to confirm His identity. Jesus did say, however, that if the Jewish leaders had believed John's testimony, they would have believed in Jesus and been saved.

**John 5:36-40** A greater testimony about Jesus was offered by His work. This could refer to the miracles He performed. Nicodemus affirmed these as evidence God had sent Jesus (Jn. 3:2). It could also refer to His teaching. God had given Jesus works to do that would identify Him as Messiah. Because of that, the Father had testified concerning Jesus.

At Jesus' baptism God said, "You are my Son" (Lk. 3:22) and sent the Holy Spirit as further evidence. The Jewish leaders who confronted Jesus, however, had never heard the voice of God nor "seen His form." While they had heard His Word through Moses and the prophets, these religious leaders refused to believe God's revelation of Himself in Jesus.

Jesus mentioned that the Jewish leaders were diligent in their study of the Scriptures. They believed Scripture would point them to eternal life. Yet they missed God's message: the messiah was coming and would give eternal life to those who placed their faith in Him. This is the witness of the Old Testament. By refusing to see it, the Jewish leaders would not experience the eternal life they wanted.

**John 5:41-44** Jesus did not need the approval of humans, particularly the religious leaders, to carry out the ministry the Father had given Him. He had the Father's approval, which is infinitely superior. Jesus knew what the religious leaders were really like because of His perfect insight into the hearts of men (Jn. 2:25). Jesus could tell that the religious leaders did not really love God.

Despite God's affirmation of Jesus, the religious leaders did not believe He was Messiah. Yet as Jesus pointed out, they had no trouble believing in false teachers or false messiahs who came in their "own name." Jesus said the reason they refused to believe in Him was that they sought honor from each other rather than from God. They were interested only in themselves and what they could receive.

**John 5:45-47** Jesus stated that He did not have to be the one who accused them in front of God because of their unbelief. Their condemnation would come from Moses, to whom God had given the Law they held in such high esteem. Though they claimed to be "disciples of Moses" (Jn. 9:28), they ignored the testimony about Jesus found in the books of the Law Moses had written (Gen. 49:10, Num. 24:17, Dt. 18:15).

To address this inconsistency, Jesus later told a parable about a rich man who was sent to hell. The rich man was concerned that his brothers would miss out on eternal life. Abraham told him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Lk. 16:31).

## Implications

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The Word (Jesus) brought light to humanity. He is the revelation of who God is and how God wants people to relate to Him. Throughout history, people have sought enlightenment to improve their quality of life. Some have

found it through faith in Jesus Christ, while others have refused to believe in the One who shines in the darkness. How has Jesus Christ opened your eyes to see clearly who God is and how He wants to relate to you?

Jesus not only created life, but He also gives life to those who trust and accept Him. This type of life is more than mere existence. It refers to spiritual life: knowing God and experiencing His power to transform your heart.

What could you say to a student who is dissatisfied with life and is seeking meaning?

Jesus is the central unifying figure of the Bible. Yet throughout history, many people who have studied the Bible (such as the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day) have missed its testimony concerning Jesus. The whole biblical witness points to the fact that Jesus came to earth as the Son of God to provide light about God's plan for salvation.

Through Jesus, God offers eternal life to those who will believe in Him. Throughout the *Christ* series, be alert to the opportunities to present Jesus as Lord and Savior to your students.

## Teaching Plan

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### Connect

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#### Master Teacher Option: Center Stage

*(10 minutes, easy set-up)*

*Students will identify the main characters of current movies.*

*Identify the top movies that your students have seen recently, and create a presentation slide with these listed.*

Display the presentation slide you created with a list of current movies students have seen. Review the movie titles and lead students to call out the main character in each movie. Then, instruct students to join two or three other students around them and to then decide which main character they believe was the most “important” to the film and its outcome. After two minutes, call for volunteers to share their opinions.

Ask: **Who is the main character of the Bible?** Allow students to name a few people from the Bible, and then explain that although there are lots of different people who are important in the Bible, it tells an overarching story about God’s effort to have a relationship with humanity. Say: **This big-picture story is continuous throughout the entire Bible and culminates in Jesus.** Conclude by saying: **Today we’re going to begin a study of Christ, the central figure of our salvation.**

### Explore

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#### Master Teacher Key Study: His Identity in Scripture

*(15-20 minutes, easy set-up)*

*Students will study John 1:1-5, 14, and 5:31-47 to examine how Jesus is identified in Scripture.*

*Print one copy of the Master Teacher Key Study for your use. Provide a copy of the Student Worksheet and a pen for each student.*

**Learning Goal:** Students will examine how Scriptures from both the Old and New Testament point to Jesus as the Messiah.

Pass out pens and copies of the Master Teacher Student Worksheet. Then use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach John 1:1-5, 14, and 5:31-47.

## Transform

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### Deeper Discussion

*(5-10 minutes, easy set-up)*

*Students will discuss their thoughts on Jesus' place in history and Scripture as the Messiah.*

**Learning Goal:** Students will begin to value Jesus as the Messiah who came to save them from their sins and give them eternal life.

Use the following questions to help students discuss Jesus' place in history and Scripture as the Messiah.

- **When you think of Jesus, the Son of God, living here on earth, what feelings come to mind?**
- **John described Jesus as "the Word," "Creator," "Life," and "Light." How do these titles for Jesus shape your view of who Jesus is?**
- **Does knowing Jesus affect the way you live? Should it?**
- **In what ways does your life reflect the relationship that you have with Jesus Christ as the Messiah?**

Divide students into groups of two or three, and then encourage them to discuss ways that Jesus' place in history was confirmed through Scripture and eyewitnesses. Then, encourage students to discuss how their lives have changed by accepting that Jesus has saved them from their sins. Encourage students to close by praying for each other to live out their faith in Christ by telling others about their Lord.

### Master Teacher Option: Light in the Darkness

*(10 minutes, easy set up)*

*Students will discuss Jesus' role as the Light that illuminated the darkness.*

*Bring a trick candle that relights itself after it is blown out. Also provide matches.*

**Learning Goal:** Students will begin to value Jesus as the Messiah who came to save them from their sins and give them eternal life.

Darken the room and light the candle. Then, say: **John said that Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness.** Allow students to focus on the flame. Explain that when we allow sin into our lives, it extinguishes the flame. Blow out the trick candle. As it continues to burn, say: **In a world of sin and darkness, Jesus came to bring light and life. Jesus, the Messiah, came to save us from our sins, show us how to live in God's Kingdom, and give us eternal life.** Try to blow out the candle again. Say: **The light from Jesus does not allow the darkness of sin to continue.** As the flame returns, read John 1:14 from your Bible. (Memorize this verse in case the light of the candle makes it too dim to read.)

Lead students to reflect silently on what they know about Jesus. Then, ask: **How does your relationship with Jesus affect the way you live?** Encourage students to share their thoughts with another student.

(You may want to be the first to share with students how Jesus has affected your life.) Finish by informing students that they will learn a great amount about Jesus this year, but it all starts with the fact that Jesus came to save us from our sin, transform our lives, and give us eternal life. Close by leading students in prayer that they will use this study to allow Christ to be the light in their lives.

## Take Home Activity

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### Family Devotion

*(10-15 minutes at home, easy set-up)*

*Distribute copies of the Family Devotion to students and encourage them to share the devotion with their family.*

A copy of the Family Devotion will be included in your lesson PDF download.

## HIS IDENTITY IN SCRIPTURE

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

**Introduction:** What are some ways that people can prove their identity? In the United States, people are issued a birth certificate and Social Security number shortly after birth that serves as a legal document proving their identity. Over their lifetime, people may also be issued a driver's license or passport. In addition to these legal documents, people have biological identifiers, such as DNA, fingerprints, dental records, and retinal scans. When this evidence is examined, their identity is proven. Today, we'll examine Scripture to discover the proof of Jesus' identity.

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### 1. We can trust our lives to Jesus because He is God, Creator, and Savior (John 1:1–5, 14).

**Biblical Background:** Jesus became the expression of God as His living Word—the living, eternal revelation of Himself. John described Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God, born into the world to reveal God's glory (vv. 1–2, 14). Further, John explained that Jesus Christ is God, the Creator of all things (v. 3). Jesus Christ came to be our Savior, rescuing us from death by His life and from darkness by His light (vv. 4–5). When we profess our belief that Jesus is God and Savior, we join with millions of others who bear witness to His true identity.

**Illustration:** In his book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis described how people see Jesus: “People often say about Him: ‘I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

**Application:** John presented Jesus as God, Creator, and Savior. But, as C. S. Lewis wrote, we all have to decide whether or not to accept Him as such.

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### 2. We can trust our lives to Jesus based on the credible testimony of others (John 5:31-47).

**Biblical Background:** Although Jesus testified to His own identity, He knew that Jewish law required the testimony of additional witnesses (vv. 31–32). Therefore, Jesus pointed out that, for a time, the Jews had accepted what John the Baptist testified about Jesus' identity (vv. 33–35). By completing the work God had sent Him to do, Jesus had revealed His true identity as the Messiah (vv. 36-38). Because the Jews had spent centuries studying the writings of Moses and the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures, they should have realized who Jesus was, but they refused to accept Him as their Messiah (vv. 39–47).

**Illustration:** A famous radio commentator that your parents and grandparents used to listen to (Paul

Harvey) told the story of a man who did not believe in God. He became a believer one Christmas Eve when he felt compassion on some birds who were freezing in the cold. Because the birds were afraid of him, the man wished that he could become a bird so that he could show them the way to safety. Suddenly he understood the reason why God came to earth in the form of a human being.

**Application:** Obviously, we were not there to see Jesus walk upon this earth, so our belief in Jesus as God in the flesh is a step of faith. If God had not come in the flesh, we would not know how to be saved from our sin. The way to safety and life would not exist.

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**Conclusion:** Scripture points to the fact that all of these things about Jesus are true (Jn. 5:31–47). Jesus testified that the words of Moses in Scripture were evidence that He is God, the Creator, and the Savior. Jesus is God in the flesh. If we find it difficult to trust the testimonies of other believers, we can read God’s Word and discover that all of it, from cover to cover, points to God’s Son, Christ our Savior.

# LESSON 1

## HIS IDENTITY IN SCRIPTURE

**Biblical Passage:** John 1:15, 14; 5:31-47

**Memory Verse:** John 1:14 “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

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1. We can trust our lives to Jesus because He is \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ (John 1:1–5, 14).
2. We can trust our lives to Jesus based on the \_\_\_\_\_ of others (John 5:31-47).

### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When you think of Jesus, the Son of God, living here on earth, what feelings come to mind?
  - John described Jesus as “the Word,” “Creator,” “Life,” and “Light.” How do these titles for Jesus shape your view of who Jesus is?
  - Does knowing Jesus affect the way you live? Should it?
  - In what ways does your life reflect the relationship that you have with Jesus Christ as the Messiah?
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### WHAT’S THE WORD?

Beginning

LIFE

DARKNESS

FLESH

Unique

Grace

WORD

Light

Overpower

GLORY

Father

TRUTH

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### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . .

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”—*C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity*

# LESSON 1

## HIS IDENTITY IN SCRIPTURE

**CHRISTOS**  
STUDENT EDITION

**Biblical Passage:** John 1:15, 14; 5:31-47

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Whether we recognize it or not, we are all bombarded daily by false teachings about the person and purpose of Jesus Christ. For example, the book (and subsequent movie release) written by Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code*, was the number one book read on college campuses for years. Brown's book presented an elaborate and fictional story that tried to disprove that Jesus was (and is) the Son of God who lived on this earth and died for our sins. Regardless of what others say about Jesus, we all must decide for ourselves what to do with the evidence—whether to trust Christ or reject Him.

Read John 1:1–5, 14 and 5:31–47. Notice that John the Baptist, God the Father, the Scriptures, and Moses all served as witnesses of Jesus' identity. Each of these reinforced the fact that Jesus was who He said He was. Jesus not only created life but also gives life to those who trust and accept Him. This type of life is more than mere existence; it refers to spiritual life—knowing God and experiencing His power to transform your heart.

John wrote that Jesus brought light to humanity. Jesus Christ is the revelation of who God is and how God wants people to relate to Him. Throughout history people have sought enlightenment to improve their quality of life. Some have found it through faith in Jesus Christ, while others have refused to believe in the One who shines in the darkness.

### CONNECTION QUESTIONS:

- Was all the evidence given in these verses credible? Why?
- What evidence did you find most compelling? Why?
- How does the fact that Jesus is the Son of God change your everyday life?