

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 1:6-13 | A REASONABLE AND TRANSFORMATIVE FAITH

KEY TERMS

Witness - The concept of “bearing witness” (or “giving testimony”) about Jesus plays a big role in John’s gospel. As the story progresses, John applies this term to testimony about Jesus given by God the Father, God the Spirit, Jesus’ miracles, the OT Scriptures, and Jesus’ disciples.

John the Baptist - John the Baptist was a prophet of sorts who lived in the wilderness, dressed and ate simply, and who called on Israelites to repent and be baptized in preparation for the coming of the Messiah (see Matt 3:1-17). Interestingly, John’s gospel minimizes the actions of John the Baptist in order to magnify the contrast between John the Baptist (*not* the Messiah) with Jesus (the *actual* Messiah).

Children of God - This concept of belonging to God’s family is found in several places in John’s gospel and in the New Testament as whole. In John 3, Jesus will speak of being *born again* through faith in Jesus. Paul, on the other hand, uses the language of adoption—not birth—to speak of Christians as *sons* (or daughters) of God who are *co-heirs* with Jesus and will inherit heavenly blessings (Ro 8:12-17).

SYNOPSIS

As John continues his prologue (vv. 1-18), he introduces John the Baptist in verse 6 calling him *a man sent from God*. This introduction from the writer highlights that John is important (*sent from God*), but not the main thing because he is simply *a man* in contrast to *the Word*. Instead of focusing on John’s preaching and baptizing, this gospel focuses on John as a *witness* to Jesus—*the true light* (vv. 7-9). John’s gospel has essentially called John the Baptist as its first witness to who Jesus is and what he has come to do. John the apostle then writes that Jesus *was coming into the world...[that] was made through him, yet the world did not know him* (vv. 9-10). John tells us that the cosmic Christ described as the *Word* earlier in the prologue entered into the world he created and yet was rejected by it. There’s a shift in verse 12, though, as John writes, *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*. John sets up a contrast between those who reject Jesus (*the Word*) and miss out on the light, and those who receive Jesus and enjoy his light. People accept Jesus, according to John, not naturally or by human will, but *of God* (v. 13).

GOING DEEPER

Read Romans 12:17 and Galatians 4:1-7. How is Paul’s language about becoming part of God’s family similar to John’s? How is it different? According to both John and Paul, what types of things are true of those who belong to God’s family?

DID YOU KNOW?

In the Bible, the idea of being *sent* by God comes up often and with importance. For example, Moses was sent to lead Israel out of Egypt and Jonah was sent to warn Nineveh to repent. In the same way, John the Baptist was *sent from God* to prepare the way for Jesus who is *sent* to save the world.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 1:6-13. What jumps out to you? What words are repeated?
2. How does John's gospel contrast John the Baptist (verses 6-8) with Jesus (verses 1-5)? What is John's role in the story?
3. In verses 9-13, what are the two types of responses the world had (and continues to have) to the "true light" (Jesus)?
4. In verses 12-13, what does John say about 1) the result of receiving Jesus and 2) how someone can receive him?

LIVING THE WORD

5. Is your perception of Christianity closer to Christianity as a *reasonable* faith or a *blind* faith? Why?
6. How does it encourage you to know that if you've received Jesus you are given a new identity as a child of God? What differences does this truth make for your life?
7. What are some ways Jesus has transformed your life? Or, what are some areas of your life you desire for Jesus to transform?
8. What types of things are keeping you from fully trusting and following Jesus? What would it look like to lay those down and go "all in" on the gospel story?