



The law & Gospel method of Bible study is the Church's traditional way to study the Bible, which was popularized by Martin Luther. Law & Gospel Bible study makes a distinction between God's two main Biblical themes: law & Gospel. God's law theme identifies our sin, by revealing what God wants us to do that we don't do. God's Gospel theme identifies our need for Jesus the Savior, and reveals how God's love offers us salvation through Christ.

STEP ONE PRAY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT TO REVEAL GOD'S VOICE THROUGH THE TEXT:

"Father, let your law and Gospel voice renew our love, faith, and hope."

STEP TWO READ THE TEXT REPEATEDLY UNTIL YOU CAN TELL IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS:

John 1:1-18 (See the reverse side of the worksheet for the printed Gospel text)

STEP THREE REVIEW A STUDY BIBLE TO DETERMINE THE TEXT'S THEOLOGICAL MEANING:

Unlike the other three historical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), the Gospel of John is a blend of theology and poetry. For example: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."* This one verse has inspired theologians to write books, musicians to compose music and poets to write poetry. The Jewish concept of the "Word" of God is rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures which is associated with both God's spoken Word(s) and the actions God has taken. In the Old Testament, God's Word created all life and is the revealing, saving, and judging power of the Almighty. Within John's Gospel, the Son of God is the living presence of God through Christ Jesus. The Word, the Son, existed with God from the beginning, at the time of the creation of the world. And, the Word, Christ Jesus, has been intimately involved in the creation of all that is. This first verse of John's first chapter of Gospel describes what theologians call the *pre-existence* of Christ. *If* Jesus was with God before the creation of the world... *then* God has always been like Jesus. It is easy to assume that the God we read about in the Old Testament is more like a judge than our Father. But, John's Gospel describes that Jesus has revealed that love, not judgment, has always been the best description of God. It is like when a child learns how to play a song on the piano. At first it doesn't sound right. But, it doesn't mean that the music is bad. Jesus is the true *music* of God. It was not until his life, birth, and resurrection...it was not until he became our indwelling Lord that we know that God was not a judge, but a loving Father. John begins his Gospel story not with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, but John starts before the world was ever created. John retells the creation story, but this time it will have a happy ending for everyone. The connection to Genesis 1 reminds us that although we were made in God's image, something dreadful happened that we call sin, and now we are no longer in the light, but in complete darkness. In fact, says John, we actually now prefer darkness. The worst thing about all of this is that we are not capable of recognizing or accepting Christ. Because we cannot help ourselves out of our sinful dilemma, God comes from the outside to intervene through his own Son. This only Son chose to leave his closeness to the Father's heart (v.18) in order to rescue us as our Savior *from* sin, *for* inclusion into God's family (v. 12). We can now live as we were intended to live in the first place. We now reflect the image of the "Father's only Son" (v. 14); not just for our own sake, but to *"lighten the path of those still in darkness"* (20:31).



John 1:1-18 ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me." ') ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

STEP FOUR COMPLETE A LAW & GOSPEL BIBLE STUDY TO *Restore Hope in the Savior*

Law Question: How does this text reveal our sin (self-centeredness) and how we do not live as God desires?

Answer.....

Gospel Question: How does this text reveal God's gift of Jesus as the Savior who freely offers us salvation?

Answer.....

Please send your "answers" to Pastor Bob: Schmalzle@yahoo.com which he likes to incorporate into the sermon.

STEP FIVE PRAYERFULLY MEDITATE UPON GOD'S GOSPEL VOICE: *Restoring Our Hope*

A. Quieting Our Inner Sanctuary: We quiet our hearts (souls) by focusing on our breathing. Breathe in slowly to the count of five (J-E-S-U-S)...hold your breath to a count of six (C-H-R-I-S-T)...exhale to a count of seven (T-H-E- L-O-R-D). Repeat this pattern of breathing until you are relaxed.

B. Dwelling within Our Inner Sanctuary: We meet the Lord Jesus in the sanctuary of our hearts (souls), which is a place created within our mind's eye for us to be with the Lord. Using our favorite sights, sounds, smells and feelings, we visualize our inner sanctuary as a place of peace where the Lord Jesus meets us.

C. Listening to God's Voice in Scripture Speak to Us through Jesus: As Jesus meets us in our inner sanctuary, he lovingly shares God's Gospel message of hope from the Scripture text we have just studied. Listening to God's Gospel voice restores our trust and hope that Jesus' death and resurrection freely offers us eternal Salvation. When Jesus speaks to us, our souls are nourished and refreshed.

STEP SIX SHARE THIS LAW & GOSPEL BIBLE STUDY WITH A FRIEND:

Forward this via email, give a printed copy, or like then re-post on social media

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