The God Before Abraham

Discovering the Name Above All Names · John 1:1

Read it. Talk about it. Live it.

INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to help your group go deeper into the truths presented in this sermon. The central theme is the identity of Jesus Christ as the one true God revealed throughout all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. As you work through these questions together, approach them with open hearts and a willingness to let God's Word speak for itself.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. John's Gospel Presents a Unique Portrait of Christ Unlike the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), John's Gospel opens not with a genealogy or a historical narrative but with a declaration of Christ's eternal nature. John, who was uniquely close to Jesus, understood that Jesus was not merely a great teacher or prophet but the very expression of God in human form.

2. The Word Was God John 1:1 establishes that the Word was not simply alongside God or subordinate to God, but was God himself. This is foundational to understanding who Jesus is and why his name carries ultimate authority.

3. The Name of Jesus Is Woven Throughout All of Scripture The Hebrew name Yeshua, meaning "God is my salvation," appears throughout the Old Testament wherever the word "salvation" is used. Jesus is not a New Testament invention. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the same God who revealed himself to Moses as I AM.

4. Christian Culture Is Not the Same as Christ's Character Having a Christian background, family heritage, or cultural identity does not equal a genuine relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit convicts and transforms, not merely comforts.

5. Jesus Is the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever From Genesis to Malachi, Jesus is present, active, and central to the story of God's redemption. Every book of the Old Testament points to him in a unique way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening Question (Ice Breaker)

- When did you first begin to understand that Jesus was more than just a historical figure or a good moral teacher? What shifted your understanding?

Section 1: Who Is John, and Why Does It Matter?

The preacher described John as the disciple who rested his head on the chest of Jesus, literally hearing the heartbeat of God in human form.

1. How do you think John's closeness to Jesus shaped the way he wrote his Gospel? What does it tell us about the kind of relationship God desires to have with us?
2. The sermon described John 1:1 as a declaration that the Word was with God and also was God. Why do you think this distinction matters for how we pray, worship, and live out our faith?
3. Some groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, interpret this passage to mean Jesus was "a god" rather than God himself. Without debating those groups specifically, discuss why the identity of Jesus is so foundational to Christian faith. What is at stake if we get this wrong?

Section 2: The Name Hidden in Plain Sight

The preacher explained that the Hebrew name Yeshua, translated as Joshua in the Old Testament, carries the meaning "God is my salvation." Wherever the Old Testament uses the word "salvation," the Hebrew word is the same root as the name Jesus.

1. Exodus 14:13 describes Moses telling the people to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Knowing that the word "salvation" here is linguistically connected to the name Jesus, how does that change the way you read Old Testament passages like this one?
2. The sermon listed a way that Jesus is represented in every single book of the Old Testament, from the seed of the woman in Genesis to the pierced one in Zechariah. Were there any of those connections that surprised you or that you had never considered before? Which one stood out most to you and why?
3. Why do you think God chose to hide the revelation of his name and identity throughout the Old Testament rather than making it immediately obvious? What does that tell us about the nature of faith and seeking God?

Section 3: Before Abraham Was, I AM

In John 8:58, Jesus makes an extraordinary claim by using the same phrase God used when speaking to Moses, declaring his eternal existence before Abraham.

1. The religious leaders of Jesus's day understood exactly what he was claiming when he said "I AM." They immediately picked up stones to kill him. Why do you think modern culture is often more comfortable with a Jesus who is a good teacher than with a Jesus who claims to be the eternal God?
2. The preacher made the point that claiming the right heritage, whether Jewish lineage from Abraham or a Christian family background, does not produce salvation. How does this challenge the way we

sometimes think about faith in our own communities and families?

3. Jesus said in John 14:6 that he is the only way to the Father. How do you navigate conversations about this truth with people who find it exclusive or offensive? How can you hold to this conviction with both confidence and compassion?

Section 4: Christian Culture vs. Christ's Character

The preacher drew a sharp distinction between people who carry the cultural markers of Christianity and people who are genuinely transformed by the Holy Spirit.

1. What are some practical differences between someone shaped by Christian culture and someone shaped by Christ's character? How can you tell the difference in your own life?
2. The preacher said the Holy Spirit will convict you to your cross, not comfort you in your sin. Have there been moments in your life where the Holy Spirit convicted you of something that was uncomfortable but ultimately led to growth? How did you respond?
3. The preacher challenged the group to take personal responsibility for knowing God's Word rather than relying solely on a pastor or teacher. What does a personal, consistent engagement with Scripture look like practically in your own life right now?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

This Week, Choose One or More of the Following:

1. **Read the Gospel of Mark in one sitting.** The sermon recommended it as the best starting point for anyone new to the Bible or looking to revisit the life of Jesus with fresh eyes. Set aside an hour or two and read it straight through.
2. **Trace the name of Jesus through the Old Testament.** Pick three to five of the Old Testament books mentioned in the sermon and read the passages where Jesus is foreshadowed. Write down what you observe and bring your reflections back to the group.
3. **Examine your own foundation.** Spend time in honest prayer asking God to show you the difference between cultural Christianity and genuine relationship with him. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas where you have been comfortable rather than convicted.
4. **Share the name.** Identify one person in your life who may have a Christian cultural background but may not have a genuine relationship with Jesus. Pray for them daily this week and look for a natural opportunity to have a real conversation about who Jesus is.
5. **Memorize John 1:1.** Rather than quoting the text directly, work to internalize the truth it conveys: that from the very beginning, the Word, the full expression of God, was present, was with God, and was God himself. Let that truth anchor your week.

CLOSING REFLECTION

The preacher closed the sermon with a prayer asking God to raise up people not of Christian culture but of Christ's character. Take a few minutes as a group to pray together, asking God to move you from cultural familiarity with Jesus into genuine, transforming relationship with him.

Close with this thought from the sermon:

"He is the one true living God. There is none beside him. He was for all times the salvation, the Joshua, the Yeshua, the Jesus for a lost and dying world."

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- John chapters 1 through 10
- Exodus 3:13-15, where God reveals his name to Moses as I AM
- Isaiah 53, the suffering servant passage pointing to Christ
- Hebrews 13:8, affirming that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever
- Acts 4:12, on the singular saving power of the name of Jesus

All sermon notes and slides are available on the church website for personal study and devotional use.

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