

Find Life Launch

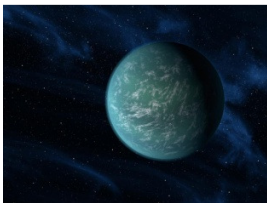
Looking for answers in all the wrong places

John 1

John 1:1-4 ^{NIV} **John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was LIFE, and that LIFE was the light of men.

Astronomers at NASA are unusually excited at the moment. Their Kepler space telescope's located what they believe is a planet they think just might be capable of sustaining life. Hard to know for sure. It's 600 light years away.

But the planet known as Kepler 22b orbits a star much like our own. It's in what they call the "Goldilocks" zone where water can exist in liquid form on the surface and conditions MAY BE favorable for life as it is known on Earth.



The people from SETI. The ones who search the skies for radio signals with their huge signal dishes. They're pretty excited too. They're aiming at the target, and listening for life.

But it's not just astronomers on the hunt. The search for life is on in all sorts of places and in bunch of different ways.

There's the search for life OUT THERE. That's the search through the telescope. But there's also the search through the microscope. We're digging down into the earth to find signs of microscopic life that might tell us about life a long time ago.



We're playing around with DNA and there's the ever present question. Can we create life...human life in particular?

Then there's the search for the origins of life. Theoretical physicists like Stephen Hawking are trying to peer back in time to find how life started.

And for us mere mortals who can only read the reports. We're interested in the outcome of that stuff. But we're all involved in some degree in a search for the philosophy of life. The meaning of life.

Books and movies are always having some sort of a go at explaining the reason for life. Some in particular. Like the hitchhikers guide to the galaxy. Where a supercomputer takes 7 ½ million years to work out that the answer is 42.



There's one out recently. A movie that is. called EAT PRAY LOVE. This is the movie from a book that was on the NYT best seller list for 187 weeks. Where the

character played by Julia Roberts heads off to find meaning in life through those three things. FOOD AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND LOVE.

We're looking for life ALL OVER THE PLACE. But here's the thing. Wherever we look. Through the telescope or the microscope. Or NAVEL GAZING. In all areas it seems...the findings are FRUSTRATINGLY INCONCLUSIVE.

There MIGHT be life on mars...O Or on the other side of the universe.

The universe MIGHT have started something like this. Hard to say. Life MIGHT be about food or love. But it MIGHT be about anything.

I was at a local coffee shop this week. I'm a big fan of good coffee. But there was a sign above the counter said. "Coffee for the soul". And I thought....OH COME ON.

I guess we could add DRINK to EAT PRAY LOVE.

Surely we can do better than 42? Surely we can do better than Coffee. For the soul's deep needs?

And as we start this series in John's gospel. We're focusing on this issue of LIFE.

Which is a prominent theme.

Was back then too when it was written. Nothing's really changed.

SLIDE - FINDLIFE

And it's like here's John. In a room full of people....everyone's got something to say on the issue. And there's John. With his hand in the air. While everyone's talking. Maybe life's this. Maybe life's that.

Coffee, particles, whatever.

And John's saying. I've got something to say.

If you'll just stop for a second.

And that's what I'm hoping I suppose. Out of this find life series. I'm hoping we'll take the time to just STOP.. and listen to what John's got to say. Because when it comes to finding life. John's got something profound to say. As he points us to Jesus.

He doesn't want us to look through the telescope. Or the microscope. He wants us to see a person who comes to us. He wants to point us to Jesus and say. Here's life right here. If you're looking for origins. Look to Jesus. If you're looking for life beyond. Look to Jesus. If you're looking for meaning and purpose. Same thing.

John's suggesting. **MAYBEWE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR LIFE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES.**

And as we'll see. Even religion has got it badly wrong when it comes to finding true life.

So John says. If you're searching for life. Consider Jesus. Even if you're not. Even if you're flying through and you're doing great.....even if you don't think you

need to know.... or you already think you know. Even then. Stop...and Consider Jesus.

And John says you'll find life beyond your wildest dreams.

Pray

I'm going to throw out a few names. Names of well known people. And I have to warn you. As I do. In an involuntary way you'll probably get some images popping into your head. Along with some brief thoughts or perspectives about them.

So for example if I said. Bob Katter. You're going to find it hard to keep some sort of image out. If you know who he is. Could be this one.



Or this one



Or some other one.

But if you know who he is. You'll have something jumping around in your head. And I am sorry about that. But it's just the way it is. And I did warn you.

Here's some other names.

Bronwyn Bishop. Again. Sorry. Elton John. Pauline Hanson. Steve Irwin.

That's enough to make my point. And my point is this. That when you heard each of those names. You probably had an image. And you probably had an impression as well. Of what you think of them.

Maybe if you had to express it you might have a one or two or three word summary.

But I want to say this. That that image. And that impression. Are almost certainly wrong. If you're only going off limited knowledge. Almost certainly your judgment isn't based on deep and true knowledge.

I mean..can that snapshot really give you a true insight? Can that image from the TV...can that carefully selected media sound bite. Can that really. Give you confidence..you've got the full story?

I doubt it.

I doubt. Someone who knows those people well. Mother daughter brother friend. I doubt they'd have the same image. The same impression as you.

And we can't help that. I haven't met Bob Katter in person. All I have is what I've been selectively fed. That's just the way it is.

And when it comes to Jesus. I think it's a bit like that. I don't think we can help it. Our image of him is what it is. Our impression is what it is.

And so as John leads us in here at the start of his gospel. For sixteen verses he keeps well clear of the name Jesus. Whatever you think of Jesus. Whatever image you have. He wants that out of the way. Because he knows our tendency.

Even back when this was written. There were all sorts of ideas out there about Jesus. caricatures. And quotes out of context. And misquotes. And misrepresentations. And careful selections.

Just like there is now.

And he wants all that out of the way. So we can hear what's being said in a fresh way.

SLIDE - FINDLIFE

So as much as it's possible. Can I ask you to try to put those pre-existing ideas about Jesus aside. If you're new to church. Especially if you're long time church goer. Let's try to hear and picture and inwardly digest this with that in mind.

So let's get into it.

John 1.1

In the beginning was the word.

Two concepts there. The beginning. John's taking us back to the beginning of the world. To the beginning recorded in Genesis the first book of the bible which starts with those same three words. In the beginning.

So first concept. The beginning. Second concept..... the word. Which is a bit abstract at this point.

Now, Genesis says in the beginning there was God and a formless earth. And that's it. It says in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

In a formless and dark world God says let there be light. And there's light. He says "Let there be sky and stars and earth and living creatures". And it all happens. The formless is formed and made orderly. And the world that before was devoid of life's now teeming with it.

And John's sort of importing all that with those well chosen words. In the beginning.

But then.... he introduces what seems like this other entity.

The word. And that's his focus for the next little bit.

In the beginning was the WORD. And the WORD was with God. And the WORD was God. As all that was happening.

The word whatever it is. Is separate from God. Because the word was WITH GOD.

And the word WAS GOD.

Which is tricky to get your head around. But keep going because it says.

HE..... was with God in the beginning.

And we're getting a bit more concrete now the word's a HE. It's a person.

He was with God in the beginning. And he WAS GOD.

Through HIM. All things were made. Which makes sense I suppose because that's what God did in the beginning.

The word that was with God and that was God. Through him all things were made. And for those of us who need things put in the reverse so we're crystal clear. John says. "Without him nothing was made that has been made."

In other words. Whatever God did. The word did. Nothing God did he did without the word. There's no sort of tag teaming going on.

Form and light and life didn't happen apart from God the word.

Verse 4

In him was life.

Him the word. Who was with God and who was God. Through whom the world was made. Through whom nothing was made that had been made.

In HIM was life.

And that life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness.

Now that's some introduction isn't it.

You can see why he wants us to put aside our pre-existing ideas.

On any scale you'd like to measure. Jesus is off it. If you think Jesus is a bit weird.

Then you're wrong. He's FAR WEIRDER than you thought.

A couple of years ago I got to see the Mona Lisa in Paris.

One of the most famous paintings of all time. You know what surprised me?

How small it is. It's not that big.

But here. John's using in HUGE brush strokes to paint a picture for us.

Before he unveils the identity of the word.

But before he does there's a tension. That's going to play out through the whole book. And the tension is....That this word. This person. Who's there at the beginning. Who's with God. Who is God. He's the author of life who has what seems like a special role of being the light giver to men. The author of life writes himself into the story. The light shines in the darkness.

Which by the way is another concept injected into the equation. The world that had light and life breathed into it now it's dark and stormy and full of gloom and there's death and all kinds of troubles.

And the light shines into it. To men. Like a single spotlight onto a stage. Like a shaft of light as the sun breaks through the clouds after a storm. The light shines.....But the darkness hasn't understood it.

There's a disconnect between the creator and the creation.

And it's this tension that John's expanding on in the rest of what's called John's prologue here. From 1 to 17.

And this tension. Is really the hinge in most of what we'll see this term. As people come to Jesus. The question is.....What do they see? Do they see the light?....or will they miss it all together. And keep fumbling around in the dark?

We'll see...equally intelligent people come to different conclusions about Jesus

The light shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not understood it.

There's a little more to it than straight out lack of understanding. We're not too keen to have our deeds and our thoughts and our actions exposed by the light. And we scurry away.

The light is someone who comes to the world in general. But he comes to the nation of Israel in particular. Later on in Genesis after the world's made. It doesn't take long for men and women to turn away from God. Things to pretty dark pretty quickly. And by chapter 12 in Genesis God's calling Abraham to be the leader of a people who he'll use to be a light to the nations. To bless a world cursed by the rebellion the bible calls sin.

It's to Israel that God speaks. And through them to others. God spoke to Abraham and Moses and the prophets after him. To show them what he's like. How they should live. How they can know him. There's a procession of passer onerers throughout the old testament. They're called prophets. And they pass on God's words. They keep pointing the people to God's plans and his instructions. They TESTIFY on God's behalf. Which is what John the Baptist does. That's verse 6

⁶ There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.

⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.

He's talking about John the Baptist. And John's God appointed job. Is to point people to the light. To pass on God's message. "Here's the light".

He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹ The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the

world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

This is why John's writing. John the gospel writer that is.

Because we're not the only ones who look for the answers in all the wrong places.

In a bunch of wild metaphors laced with all the different facets of life Jesus is going to talk about himself as the bread of life. The one who can give living water. HE's going to point to himself and say. You can have Abundant life. Eternal life. Life from the dead. The light will be shining all kinds of way. On all kinds of people... But the question is. Will they step into it? Or scurry away?

How do they respond to the light. And how do you?

Let me take you all the way to John 20. John's not backward in coming forward. This isn't written to be a BEST SELLER. I'm sure his family's not getting royalties. John says in verse 30.

John 20:30-31 ³⁰ Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

These are written that YOU MIGHT BELIEVE. And by believing that YOU MIGHT HAVE LIFE. When so many won't. Back to chapter one. And Verse 11

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¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Men and women in general. The nation of Israel in particular. And they didn't receive him.

This is Harvey Norman walking into a Harvey Norman store. And they send him packing. Which is tragic. And yet. Verse 12. Yet

¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

We'll see it next week. People have all sorts of ideas of how things are with God. You're all good...if you're part of the right nation. If you follow the rules. In with the right crowd.

A whole lot of people with a whole lot of ideas about life....and yet they're stumbling around in the dark. They've got it all wrong.

John says verse 14

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

John the Baptist testified to the people of his day. Now the other Johns telling you and I.

We've seen him.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

There's an allusion there to Israel's wanderings in the desert. Where the Lord's glory went with them in a pillar of fire at night. A cloud in the day. God's gracious declaration of his care for them. In a dark world.

But it was frightening. If you want a picture just flick back to the book of Exodus when they leave Egypt and arrive at Mt Sinai. God comes down. But the earth trembles. And there's fire and smoke. And the people say to Moses. YOU GO and speak to him. And YOU TELL US... what he says. We don't want him to speak to us. Because his glory will consume us. Moses passes that on to God and God says. Yeah that's a good thing.

And yet. John the Baptist testifies that this is the one. The word. The light. HE comes after me. But he's surpassed me because he was before me.

Code for he was there in the beginning.

The law was a blessing from God. The law and the tent God had them set up with the sacrifices and the priests. They made it possible for a holy God for a righteous God a God in whom there is no darkness at all. For him to dwell in the midst of sinful people.

God was acting graciously. And now here's the next blessing which is far better. Verse 16. From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was graciously given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

And that's what we'll see on the way through.

God who gave life in the first place.

Is giving it again. HE's creating new life in men and women as he shines the light of life. And people step into it.

So welcome aboard.

If you're someone taking this journey for the first time. You're in for some challenges and some surprises I hope. I hope your picture of Jesus will be enlarged.

And you can get stuck in by reading ahead if you'd like.

And if you're someone that's been on the journey for a while. I think with all the competing voices and with our own tendencies as well. I think our picture of Jesus is like the balloon that keeps losing air. It keeps shrinking...unless we're pumping fresh air in by coming back again and again to God's words about him. I'm hoping you'll be refreshed and reminded and encouraged. Because it's not easy living in the light. The darkness hates the light. There's volume and variety in all the theories of life, And some sound easy. And some sound popular. And there's an attraction. It's not easy to live the kind of life Jesus would have us live. Needs a strong conviction that Jesus is who he says he is. That he can do what he says.

Let me pray.