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**INTRO:** The Gospel of John differs significantly from the other Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). John begins with the exact same words as Genesis, “in the beginning,” highlighting the mystery of the person of Jesus, the one who is both fully human and fully divine. The person we encounter in Jesus is flesh and bones, someone who breathes air, hungers for food, and needs sleep like the rest of us. Yet John also stresses the divinity of Jesus more than the other Gospels. Jesus may look like your average Jewish carpenter in an average-sized village, but John won’t let us forget one important detail: Jesus is the God of the universe who showed up in human form and moved into the neighborhood. Why did he do all this? So that we might believe we can bring our whole self to God no matter our mistakes or struggles. When Jesus enters human history, hope flourishes and lives change!

1. Describe a time when you felt the hope of Jesus in the midst of a challenging situation.

#### **READ John 1:1–18**

1. What words or images stand out to you? What questions do they raise for you?
2. What differences or similarities does John’s introduction have with that of Matthew, Mark or Luke?
3. What verse feels most like the Gospel, or Good News, to you? Why?

#### **SERMON QUESTIONS:**

1. John claims that God became flesh (verse 14) and was unashamed to dwell in a human body. What messages do we receive from current culture and the media about our bodies? Does God becoming flesh challenge these messages? Why or why not?
2. What part of yourself do you tend to hide from others or God? Do you believe that you can bring your whole self to God and that He will embrace all of you?
3. How can you be a witness to the love and light of Jesus this week?

**OUTRO:** John’s Gospel offers us a message of radical hope for our lives. God became flesh to teach us what it means to be fully human and how to *embody* divine love each and every day. John often uses the word “abide” to emphasize what it means to grow in our faith. “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them” (1 John 4:16). Following Jesus is about relationships more than rules; it’s about learning how to love God, our whole selves and our neighbors like the Word that became flesh.

#### **PRAY TOGETHER.**

(Pray to listen to the loving voice of God instead of shame this week.)