

## THE WOW FACTOR

JOHN 1:1-14

### HEART OF THE MATTER - A WORD FROM KEN

The ancient Greeks and Romans called them the “Seven Wonders of the World.” They were all the buzz in the living rooms of affluent and sophisticated society leading up to the time of Christ. Even before what we call the First Century, travel agents highlighted the seven “must see” destination spots in the “civilized world.”

Each was an architectural and engineering marvel. Even today, any thoughtful observer would scratch one’s head and say out loud, “How did they do that?” The pyramids of Egypt. The hanging gardens of Babylon (near today’s Baghdad). The magnificent Temple of Artemis in Ephesus. The monumental statue to the Greek sun god Helios that stood over one hundred feet tall (the Statue of Liberty from heel to head is one hundred eleven feet) at the entrance of the harbor of Rhodes. The lighthouse of Alexandria, built three hundred years before Christ, stood four-hundred forty feet tall (about the height of a forty story building) guiding Mediterranean seafarers into port. (Only one of the “Seven Wonders” survives to this day – the Pyramids.)

Little boys would stand at the base of any one of them, mouth agape, eyes open wide. Wow! Travelers would return home with stories of amazement and detailed, mind-stretching descriptions. The wonders became bigger than life. Story-tellers pressed all the possibilities of human language to somehow replicate the experience of seeing the wonder first hand.

The pursuit of the WOW remains with us to this very day. The skyscrapers. The colossal machines. The ocean-liners. The jumbo jets. The bridges. The stadiums. They stretch the imagination. They spark a sense of awe. How did they *do* that?

These are man-made wonders. What about the wonders of nature? The starry sky. The gaping canyons. The majestic peaks. A sunset lighting a fluffy layer of high clouds in a fiery crimson and auburn glow. A full moon glittering its reflection on a watery ocean seascape in the dark of night. The scent of orange blossoms on a cool brisk California spring morning.

If these experiences trigger some degree of astonished wonder in us, what happens when we peer into the manger on Christmas morning? Look to the opening lines of the Gospel of John for some answers.

And this is the **heart of the matter**. The God of the Universe, the God of gods, the Creator, the Sustainer, the All-powerful, the Everywhere-present, the God before time, the God who will ever be, the God who is Holy, the God who Redeems, the God who speaks, the God who is Judge, the God who loves, *this* God... took on human flesh. Wow.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

AUTHENTIC INTERACTION · COMPELLING CONNECTION · IRRESISTIBLE EXPERIENCE  
LOVING ACCEPTANCE · EVANGELISTIC INFLUENCE

“In the beginning was the Word,” says John as he contemplates the arrival of Jesus. “The Word was with God... the Word was God.”

“The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling place among us... and we have seen his glory.”

Wow.

**BACKGROUND** – Matthew and Luke give some sketchy detail about the birth of Jesus. John does not speak of Bethlehem, shepherds, wise men or the manger. But he does put the arrival of Jesus into a powerfully descriptive perspective. Jesus was God’s message to the world – he is the “Word.” That message, the Good News, the Gospel, existed before time began. This is the essence of the Incarnation.

Read John 1:1-14

Think it over...

1. How is the first chapter of John a Christmas story?
2. Why did John refer to Jesus as the “Word”? (Note – John uses the personal pronoun “he.”)
3. What role did Jesus play in creation?
4. In what way did the “darkness” not understand the light?
5. Who failed to “recognize” him, and receive him? What is the promise to those who do receive him?
6. How does this arrival reflect the glory of God?

Bring it home...

1. Theologians call the arrival of Jesus in time and space the “incarnation.” (Definition: God becomes human – that is, takes on human flesh) For us Christians, it’s the central theme of Christmas. Why?
2. Many people miss the “wow.” Why?
3. As you’ve reflected on John’s Christmas message, what do you see in the manger?
4. How can the light Jesus brought into the world shine in the darkness of our world?
5. Have you received him? What promise can you claim?
6. What are some of the ways we can declare his glory?

**SHARE. SUPPORT. AFFIRM. PRAY.**