

# Understanding

## “The Word was with God” In John 1:1?

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The opening verses of John’s gospel are perhaps the most theologically packed writings in all the Bible: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (**John 1:1–2**). These words and the concepts they express form the foundation for John’s entire gospel, which was written to prove that Jesus Christ is God’s incarnate Son.

The term translated “Word” is Logos in the Greek language. John uses it here as an unmistakable reference to Jesus Christ. The Hebrews often referred to God in terms of His powerful word (**Psalms 33:6; 107:20**). With a few simple statements, John declares that Jesus, like His heavenly Father, has always existed since the beginning of time. Jesus was with God in the beginning because He is God, and He always has been.

Right out of the gate, John presents the doctrine of the deity of Christ and affirms His co-eternal nature with God as Creator of the universe (**John 1:3**). To his first-century, Greek-speaking audience, John communicates straightforward truths that don’t require explanation. But for current-day Bible readers, the expression the Word was with God hides a vital truth about the relationship between God and Jesus. No single English equivalent exists to better express the full meaning of the word with in the phrase.

In English, we typically understand the preposition with to mean “near” or “beside.” But the original Greek term expresses a living, active union in the closest, most intimate sense. When John said, “The Word was with God,” he meant that the divine Word—Jesus Christ—was not only present alongside God from all eternity but was in a living, dynamic, co-equal relationship of close communion with Him. The Holman New Testament Commentary explains, “The Greek word is *pros* which literally means ‘toward,’ implying a face-to-face relationship” (Gangel, K., Broadman & Holman, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 9).

The relationship between God and Jesus is eternal and intimately personal. The works of Christ are the works of God. The words of Jesus are the words of His heavenly Father. Because they are one, Jesus reveals the heart and mind of God to us (**John 14:9–10**). The author of Hebrews explains: “In these last days he [God the Father] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power” (**Hebrews 1:2–3, ESV**).

Jesus, who is the Word, was with God in every sense of the word. Not only is Christ the image of the invisible God (**2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15**), but He and the Father are one nature and essence (**John 10:30**). Jesus prayed for His followers to share in this same inseparable, face-to-face union: “I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one” (**John 17:21–22, NLT**).

When Jesus said, “Before Abraham was born, I am!” (**John 8:58**), He was claiming to be God. There was no doubt among the Jewish people that these words were a declaration of deity, for they reacted by picking up rocks to stone Jesus for blasphemy according to Mosaic Law (**Leviticus 24:16**).

English readers may have to dig under the surface to understand the apostle’s statement that “the Word was with God” expresses the deity of Jesus Christ and His inseparable oneness with God the Father. But in John’s first epistle, his meaning couldn’t be more evident: “And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life” (**1 John 5:20, NLT**).