

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church

John 1:1 | The Word Was God

Sunday August 2, 2026

WELCOME:

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

Today is an exciting day for us—we begin a new study in our Bibles.

The Gospel according to John.

Over the past six years, we have studied the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the *synoptic* gospels—synoptic meaning *similiar* in how they give a synopsis of Jesus' life.

Although they are similiar in telling the story of Jesus, the differences within those Gospels are what set them apart from one another.

It's a little like the human body—the eye does what the ear cannot do.

The hand serves a different purpose than the foot.

Every part of the human body matters, and every member has its place.

That's why Paul used the same illustration when talking about church membership in 1 Corinthians 12.

In the same way, every book of the Bible has its own God-given role.

Before we dive in, allow me just a moment to provide a big picture of our Bibles.

The word Bible comes from the Greek term biblia, meaning “books.”

What you hold in your hands is a library: a collection of books.

But it is not a random collection of documents.

It is one divine, unified, dramatic, violent yet beautiful story.

God used forty different men, eleven different occupations, and three different languages over a span of 1,600 years to pen the sixty-six books in our Bible.

It is the story of God's revelation to the world.

Think of the sixty-six books like sixty-six episodes in the greatest cinematic mini-series ever told!

As the story unfolds, the plot deepens, the light gets brighter, and the glory of God becomes clearer.

The Bible as a whole has many, many themes that run all the way through it, from Genesis to Revelation.

Like any good story, there are many different characters, but in this one—there is one hero at the heart of it all.

And that hero is God Himself, revealed in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This book is not about us—it's about Him.

Let me address why I've chosen to teach the four Gospels back to back.

The reason is that each Gospel writer has a different audience and theme.

We started with Mark, mostly because his Gospel is the shortest and most action-packed.

So I wanted to whet everyone's appetite.

Mark wrote to the Romans with the theme of servanthood—and Mark clearly communicates that Jesus is the Servant of servants.

Matthew wrote to *Jewish Christians* with the theme that Jesus is King—the King of the kingdom of God.

Luke wrote to the Greeks with the theme of humanity.

So all three synoptic Gospels focus on Jesus' human life in some form or fashion, but John's Gospel focuses on a wider audience of both Christians and non-Christians.

His focus is not humanity, but divinity.

John answers the questions that we all have at one time or another: “Is there a God? What's His name? What's He like?”

The Lord answers those questions through His Bible.

God has revealed His truth progressively throughout His Word.

He didn't dump everything on us at once.

He spoke through history, through prophets, through law, through sacrifice, through psalms, through kings, through warnings, through promises.

Scripture is like a sunrise.

At first there's just a little light on the horizon. Then it grows. Then it spreads.

Then the whole sky is lit.

That is how Scripture works—God is the source of all spiritual illumination.

The reason I'm teaching the Gospels back-to-back is that by doing so, we learn the entire story from Genesis to Revelation.

By teaching the Gospels, we study the whole counsel of God.

We witness the spiritual sunrise that the Lord has given throughout His Word.

Each week, we flip back to the OT, then move forward to the Epistles.

By going back to the OT, we see how God first spoke to His people, the importance of His law and the prophets, and the reason for miracles.

By flipping forward to the Epistles, the Apostles explain and teach further what Jesus taught Himself.

In addition, by studying the Gospels, we learn the differences within the books themselves: law, history, wisdom, poetry, narrative, epistles, prophecy, and apocalyptic literature.

We also learn how to read these books correctly—because it's dangerous to read them all the same way.

We don't read Scripture flatly—when we read, interpret, and apply it correctly, Biblical truth becomes progressively clearer and clearer to us as the story develops.

So all that to say, by God's grace, we hold the entirety of everything that the Lord has said to us in this book.

There is no greater story than that of Jesus Christ—and that's why I've chosen to teach the Gospels back to back and explain them as an expositor.

It's my prayer that you would experience God verse by verse and then share Jesus day by day.

Looking ahead to John's Gospel—it has several subthemes.

Knowing God and *believing* God are key terms for John.

Both terms occur more than ninety times in this Gospel and are always used as verbs.

In other words, when we learn the word of God, we are to apply it to our lives.

God's truth is not meant merely to be admired. It is meant to be obeyed.

So *knowing* and *believing* God is very important.

But the major theme of John's Gospel is the divinity of Jesus Christ.

The Synoptics focus on Jesus' humanity while John focuses on His divinity.

John wants us to know the very essence/being/nature of who Jesus Christ is.

The Nicene Creed states:

“We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, *begotten* from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, *begotten*, not made; of the same essence as the Father.”

Your translation may read John 3:16 as, “***For God so loved the world that He gave His own begotten Son.***”

Begotten carries layers of theological meaning—and I don't mean to overimply, but know this from the beginning—*Begotten* means “always was/not created.”

In other words, God's essence—His very being is found in and through the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

More so than any other Gospel, John teaches us that Jesus of Nazareth is God Almighty.

In other words, when you see Jesus' face, you're looking at God's face.

When you hear Jesus' voice, you're hearing God's voice.

When you watch Jesus move toward sinners in the Gospels, you are seeing the heart of God in motion.

That is why John is so clear, so bold, so loved.

Martin Luther said that "if only John's Gospel and the epistle of Romans survived, Christianity would be saved."

Matthew Henry, a commentator in the 18th century, said, "John's Gospel is the jewel of the New Testament"

John Calvin said, "The other three (Gospels) exhibit Christ's body...but John exhibits His soul."

Theodore Beza said, "The most profound and spiritual of all the Gospels."

At the same time, the Gospel of John is "God's love letter to the world."

Why do so many different people so love John's Gospel? Let me give you some reasons:

- **John 3:16**— *For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

- **John 6:35**— *I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again.*
- **John 8:12**—*I am the light of the world!*
- **John 8:58**—*Before Abraham was, I am!*
- **John 10:11**— *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*
- **John 11:25**— *I am the resurrection and the life.*
- **John 14:6**— *I am the way, the truth, and the life.*

John's Gospel is the clearest and most profound Biblical revelation of Jesus' divinity.

In studying this Gospel together, we'll learn how Jesus is God of very God, AND our response to this fact should be.

Now, John's Gospel contains material that is not found in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

In fact, 90% is new—and to make room for his new material, John omitted many key events in Jesus' life:

- His Birth
- His Baptism
- The temptation by Satan
- There is no commission of the Twelve Disciples,
- The Transfiguration,
- The institution at the Lord's Supper,
- No exorcisms,
- No lengthy parables.

All these events are found in the other Gospels.

Instead, John alone speaks of changing the water into wine at the wedding at Cana.

John alone tells of Nicodemus, of the woman of Samaria, of the raising of Lazarus.

Almost two-thirds of John's Gospel tells the story of the Passion—the last week of Jesus' life.

This is going to be a life-changing study for us.

Invite your friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, and even strangers to come—so God can change their lives too!

This is why we're devoting Wednesday nights to review each sermon—to give you time to process, work through my notes, and come with your questions.

Wednesday nights are going to be a blast.

INTRODUCTION:

Before we dive into verse one, let me provide—the who, what, when, and why he wrote this Gospel.

This Gospel was written by a man named John.

Which John? Because there are several Johns in the Bible.

John's father was Zebedee, and his mother was Salome.

Salome had a sister named Mary—who was the mother of Jesus.

This means that James and John, the sons of Zebedee and Salome, were Jesus' cousins.

These brothers, James and John, should sound very familiar.

They are co-stars in the Gospel story as Disciples of Jesus.

And not just Disciples, but James and John were in the inner circle with Peter.

Remember the story of a certain mother asking Jesus to place her two sons at His right and left in His Kingdom? That was Salome talking about James and John.

The Lord Jesus gave these two brothers a nickname—because of their big mouths and short fuses—“the Sons of Thunder.”

It sounds cool, but it wasn’t a compliment.

They received this nickname after some Samaritans were rude to Jesus, and James and John, being proud and thin-skinned, asked Jesus if He wanted them to call down fire from Heaven to destroy the whole town.

They may have taken their cue from Sodom and Gomorrah—or learned that little trick from the prophet Elijah, who called down fire from heaven multiple times. (2 Kings 1:10–12),

Calling down fire from Heaven for sinful reasons is what happens when zeal overpowers wisdom.

Yet over time, John is known not as a man of violence but as a man of love.

It’s also a miracle of how God changes people’s hearts.

John never reveals his identity as the author of this Gospel.

He may have remained nameless because of the persecution that was happening around the church, but he does say this about himself—“the one Jesus loved.”

That’s a sermon in a sermon—how’s that for rivalry among the Twelve Disciples?

John not only wrote this Gospel but also the epistles of 1-3 John and the book of Revelation while exiled on an island called Patmos.

John wrote his Gospel between 70 A.D. (the destruction of the temple) and 100 A.D. (Around John's death).

If you wanted to get specific, a date in the 80s most likely.

John probably wrote this Gospel in Ephesus, which is modern-day Turkey.

In the first century, Ephesus was one of the most important cities of the Roman Empire.

It also had one of the largest Christian populations of any city.

John would have had friends in Ephesus because we know that the Apostle Paul planted a church there and spent two years teaching the Ephesians.

Paul also wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians.

So it's very possible that John had a fairly safe place to write this Gospel.

Why do all these details matter?

Because by the end of John's life, the first generation of Christians were dying off.

Yes, new believers were coming in, but so were the false teachers.

False teachers were causing all sorts of problems.

Teaching all kinds of heresies.

Things like Gnosticism—meaning you had to have a secret knowledge/code word/handshake to know God.

The Docetists argued that Christ's humanity and suffering were only superficial, not divine.

The Modalists taught that God is not the Trinity but rather works in modes that appear as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So with that background, we get a glimpse that John, in writing His Gospel, was addressing these false teachings—and that's why He's so strong on Jesus being divine—God Himself.

So that's big picture stuff on John—the who, what, when, and why he wrote this Gospel.

One final thought before we dive into verse 1:

I like comparing John's Gospel to a swimming pool, shallow enough that a child can wade in and learn to swim.

Yet at the same time, this pool is as deep as the ocean, where the Great Blue whale swims as well.

John's Gospel meets you where you are—New believer, non-believer, or a mature Believer.

But it's not only the depth of the water in this pool that matters, but it's also the clarity and the purity of the water.

It is also clear water.

Both a child and a theologian can swim in it at the same time!

A child can wade in it, a theologian can swim laps, and a non-believer can be saved by it.

All three will still discover more of Christ than they ever expected.

Let me provide a few disclaimers:

KEYPOINT 1:

You will be more challenged in John's Gospel than ever before.

That's a good thing! Being challenged is how we grow spiritually—it's how we build spiritual muscle.

John's Gospel is like Romans in this way—if we read and understand both books correctly, we won't only be challenged; we will be offended.

KEYPOINT 2:

John will offend you with some of your deeply held religious beliefs.

So don't shoot the messenger. Don't quit!

We live in a culture that cares much more about your feelings than Truth.

I do care about your feelings—but I care much more about your faith.

Please know that I don't go out of my way to offend people—I love you!

It's out of love that I must tell you the hard things because I care about you.

I don't sugarcoat things because life is too short and hell is too long.

We are not here to be entertained but to be helped—and to be unclear with spiritual truths is unfair and unkind to you.

I care much more about your faith than the momentary discomfort that you will feel at times.

If I only cared about your feelings, I wouldn't teach book by book and verse by verse—I'd teach topically—teaching how you can have your best life now.

But I refuse to do that because Scripture tells us our best life is yet to come—if we believe.

If we don't believe—this is your best life now.

So, you will be challenged in John's Gospel, and at times you will be offended. Why?

Because John cuts against the grain of both liberal and conservative versions of Christianity.

John's Gospel recognizes only two types of people:

- those who come to “the light” and those who do not
- those who do evil and those who do not
- those who believe and those who do not believe
- those who will have eternal life and those who will not

John's thesis is that Jesus Christ is God of very God.

All those false teachers in the first century had this in common—they said that He wasn't.

Here we are two thousand years removed, and the false teachers continue to say the same thing.

Who is Jesus Christ? The Gospel of John clearly answers that question.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

John 1:1—*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

John 1:2—*He was with God in the beginning.*

John 1:3—All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.

John 1:4—In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

John 1:5—That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

PRAY:

Your word (Jesus) is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path. (Psalm 119:105)
Jesus is the light of the world—please illumine our eyes with these glorious truths!

EXEGESIS:

John 1:1—In the beginning...

John's opening statement sounds very familiar.

It's a clear reference to:

Genesis 1:1—In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Though the *tone* of John's prologue is Genesis 1, the *content* is that of the Gospel.

We also see John open up his first epistle with similar language.

1 John 1:1—What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—(V.4) is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

John 1:1—In the beginning (what)... was the Word,

We know that God's word:

- Says we are freed from the power of sin
- Teaches us in times of meditation
- Comforts us in times of sorrow
- Prevails over the power of our great enemy.

But these things are not what John is referring to.

Not “a word,” but “the Word.”

The Greek term for “Word” is logos.

Logos is a concept-word in the Bible.

Yes, it refers to the revelation of God's promises, but it also reveals God Himself.

Here we see a definite article—“the” with a capital W in “Word.”

John is referring to a person, place, or thing that is unique.

In doing so, John has given Jesus a new title.

John is not guessing about Jesus—John is testifying about Jesus.

Jesus has more than 150 titles found in Scripture.

So John says, “In the beginning was the Word.”

That means Jesus did not begin:

- In Bethlehem
- In Mary's womb
- When the angels sang of His birth

Jesus was already there. He is eternal. He preexists His creation.

He stands outside time because He is the One who made time.

John is showing us that Jesus is not a creature inside the created universe.

Jesus is the Creator over the universe.

John 1:1—*In the beginning was the Word.*

Why would John call Jesus “The Word”?

What is the significance of this title?

We could translate verse 1 this way—“In the beginning was the *Speech/Communication*.”

Why’s that? Let’s start in the OT.

God has always revealed Himself to us by His Speech.

We see God speaking in Creation:

Genesis 1:3—*Then God said, “Let there be light,”*

Psalms 33:6—*The heavens were made by the word of the Lord.*

Genesis 2:18—*Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.*

Have you ever thought about which Person in the Trinity actually spoke these words?

Spoiler alert! Jesus spoke these words because that’s a part of His role within the Trinity.

The preincarnate Jesus (Jesus before Christmas) was the one with Adam & Eve, walking with them in the cool of the day (Christophany).

Jesus spoke in the garden.

He was the one who warned them, questioned them, and pursued them.

Genesis 3:3—God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’ ”

Genesis 3:9—So the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

With Abraham:

Genesis 15:1— The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision

With Moses:

Exodus 3:4—God called out to him from the bush, “Moses, Moses!”

When we get to the prophets in the OT, time and time again, they write, “The Word of the Lord came to me...”

Now, why is it important to know without a doubt that the Word is a title for Jesus?

Psalms 18:30—God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is pure.

Not only is God perfect—but so are His words.

The Jews in John’s day knew exactly who the Word was—God.

They didn’t know Him in human form.

It’s as if John personifies “the Word” to show us that apart from God speaking to us, we wouldn’t know anything about Him.

It's God who takes the initiative and reveals Himself to us—it's very dangerous to think random thoughts about who God is.

By His grace, that's why He gave us His Book!

He tells us exactly who He is, so we don't have to guess.

John is saying that the Word is not just a message—The Word is a Divine Person.

In Genesis, Jesus spoke and continues to speak throughout Scripture.

And in Revelation, Jesus specifically says.

Revelation 1:8—*"I am Alpha and Omega," says the Lord God,*

The alpha and the omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

John personified "the Word," but Jesus Himself personifies the entire alphabet.
(Rev. 1:8, 21:6, 22:13)

He is the One who speaks history into existence and the One who will bring it to completion.

Words matter—words reveal what's on someone's mind—good and bad.

Jesus said that, "...what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart." (Matt. 15:18)

Think about what a word is—it's a means of communication.

A word is how someone reveals what is inside them.

Words communicate. Words disclose.

Words make invisible thoughts visible.

If your boss says, “Can I have a word with you?” —he’s asking for information/your thoughts.

Or, maybe he has something he wants to communicate to you!

A “word” is the verbal expression of what's on someone’s mind.

Words are a method of revelation!

What are the Scriptures?

They are the Words that God has revealed about Himself.

Scriptures reveal God’s mind, express His will, make known His glory, and reveal His heart.

KEYPOINT 3:

As the Word, Jesus is the visible manifestation of the invisible God.

The visible manifestation of God is seen in His incarnation—God wrapped up in skin and bones.

Jesus is God wearing an earthsuit! (Dr. Darryl DelHousaye)

John 1:1—*In the beginning was the Word.*

In other words, Jesus was preexistent.

Before Genesis 1:1, Jesus had been in continuous existence before the beginning.

KEYPOINT 4:

Jesus “was”—He did not “become.”

Contrary to the teaching of most cults, Jesus was not the first Created Being.

He's also not Lucifer's half-brother.

John 1:1—*In the beginning was the Word. and the Word was with God.*

Now John takes his argument a step further.

That phrase means so much more than Jesus existed with God—meaning the other two Persons of the Trinity—Father and Holy Spirit.

Our English translations don't bring out the fullness of the Greek expression (*pros ton theon*).

The Father and the Son were always near one another— continually face to face.

So, there has never been a moment when God was lonely.

There has never been a moment when the Son was absent.

God has always been Triune—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have always existed in perfect love, perfect unity, and perfect fellowship.

That means Jesus is not a later addition.

He is not an afterthought. He is not a second-class being.

He was and is eternally with the Father.

The writer of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 13:8—*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

From all eternity, Jesus, as the second person of the Trinity, was with the Father and the Holy Spirit in deep, intimate fellowship. (1 John 1:2)

John 1:1—*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

John leaves us with no doubts.

However, our English language fails us here—The Greek reads, “and God was the word.”

KEYPOINT 5:

What God was (is), the Word was (is).

This is where people have the biggest problem—believing that Jesus Christ is God of very God.

People have no problem believing that Jesus was a prophet, teacher, and a moral man—but they have a big problem with this.

The Word is not a product of God, but God Himself made manifest.

We start to see the theological undertones of the Trinity—the mystery of three in one and one in three.

Each Person in the Trinity has a different role and function, but is never isolated from the others.

Jesus, as the Word of God, is distinguished from the Father and the Spirit.

Summary Verse so far:

Hebrews 1:1—*Long ago God spoke to our ancestors by the prophets at different times and in different ways.*

Hebrews 1:2—*In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. God has appointed him heir of all things and made the universe, through him.*

Hebrews 1:3—*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word.*

APPLICATION:

What does it matter to say that Jesus Christ is God of very God—The Word of God?

First, it means that we can truly know the truth about Him.

We don't have to guess. We can know what He is like.

The other side of that coin is that apart from Jesus Christ as the Word of God, we'll never know God.

It's pretty simple, isn't it?

That's precisely what John teaches in his Gospel—either we believe (and know God) or don't believe (and don't know God).

There is no middle ground.

For those of you who believe, your role is to share Jesus day by day.

For those of you who don't believe—let me encourage you to keep coming—and for everybody to show up on Wednesday night to continue this conversation, answer your questions, and make friends.

Sunday August 2, 2026

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

POP QUIZ

1. Why are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are different from one another?

- A. They were written in different languages
- B. They each have a different audience and theme
- C. They all tell completely different stories
- D. They were written centuries apart

Answer: B

2. What does the word “Bible” come from?

- A. Hebrew word for “scrolls”
- B. Latin word for “law”
- C. Greek word biblia, meaning “books”
- D. Greek word logos, meaning “word”

Answer: C

3. What major theme does John’s Gospel emphasize?

- A. Jesus’ humanity
- B. Jesus’ kingship
- C. Jesus’ divinity
- D. The history of Israel

Answer: C

4. What does the word “begotten” mean in this context?

- A. Created in time
- B. Always was / not created
- C. Adopted by God
- D. Made lesser than the Father

Answer: B

5. Why is John’s Gospel so loved by many Christians?

- A. It contains the fewest miracles
- B. It is the shortest Gospel
- C. It most clearly reveals Jesus’ divinity
- D. It focuses mainly on parables

Answer: C

6. Which of the following is one of the “I am” statements in John’s Gospel mentioned in the sermon?

- A. I am the vine
- B. I am the bread of life
- C. I am the lamb
- D. I am the door of heaven

Answer: B

7. Which event is NOT included in John’s Gospel?

- A. The raising of Lazarus
- B. The wedding at Cana
- C. The birth of Jesus
- D. The conversation with Nicodemus

Answer: C

8. Which John is the author of the Gospel?

- A. John the Baptist
- B. John Mark
- C. John Calvin
- D. John the son of Zebedee

Answer: D

9. What nickname did Jesus give James and John?

- A. Sons of Mercy
- B. Sons of Thunder
- C. Sons of Zion
- D. Sons of Peace

Answer: B

10. What does John 1:1 teach about Jesus?

- A. He became God later in life
- B. He was God’s first creation
- C. He is eternal and was with God
- D. He was only a prophet

Answer: C

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Monday — Jesus: God Revealed

1. What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is not merely a messenger from God but God Himself?
2. How does believing that Jesus is eternal (rather than created) change the way you worship Him?
3. Is there any area of your life where you treat Jesus more like a helpful teacher than the sovereign Lord?

Tuesday — The Word of God

1. John calls Jesus "the Word." What does this teach us about how God reveals Himself to humanity?
2. Have you been tempted to form your own ideas about God rather than allowing Scripture to define who He is?
3. What practical step can you take this week to know Christ better through His Word?

Wednesday — Believe and Know

1. John repeatedly emphasizes the importance of *believing* and *knowing* God. What evidence do you see that your faith is producing obedience and healthy fruit?
2. Is there an area where you know God's truth, but have not yet applied it?
3. How can you intentionally share Jesus with someone this week?

Thursday — The Trinity and God's Fellowship

1. What comfort do you find in knowing that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have existed together in perfect fellowship for all eternity?
2. How does the eternal relationship within the Trinity shape your understanding of God's love?
3. In what ways can your relationships reflect the unity, love, and humility seen within the Godhead?

Friday — Truth Over Feelings

1. The sermon reminds us that God's truth often challenges or even offends us. Has Scripture recently confronted one of your assumptions or preferences?
2. When God's Word disagrees with your opinions or culture's values, how do you normally respond?
3. What spiritual discipline will help you become more willing to submit to God's truth, even when it is difficult?

Saturday — Walking in the Light

1. John presents only two responses to Christ: believing or unbelief, coming to the light or remaining in darkness. Which choice are you making in your daily life?
2. Is there any hidden sin or area of darkness that you need to bring into Christ's light through repentance?
3. As you prepare for worship tomorrow, how will you come expecting to know Christ more deeply and worship Him more fully?

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