

*Our Daily
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Journey
Through
Series™*

 JourneyThrough™

John

50 Daily Insights from God's Word by **David Cook**



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Foreword

John begins his gospel with words that remind us of Genesis—"In the beginning". In John's gospel, we have a new Genesis, a new beginning, the coming into flesh of the Lord of the new creation.

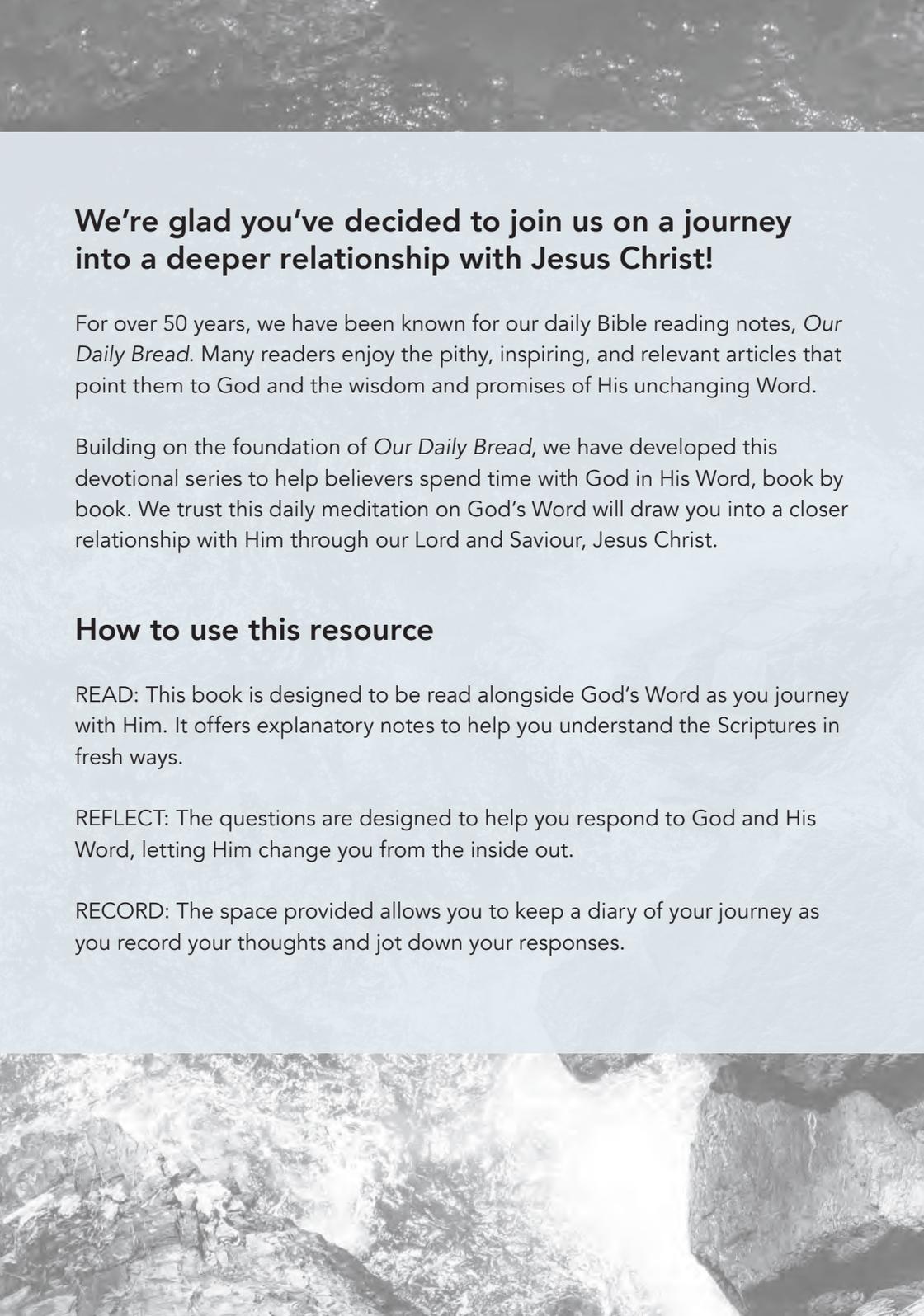
The major theme of John's gospel is that Jesus is the source of life of the new creation. We read that eternal life is "[knowing] you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3). God bestows new birth for the new creation (John 3:3, 5); the children of God are those who are born of God (1:13); and new birth is the giving of this eternal life.

In John's gospel, Jesus states His claims: I am the bread of life; the light of the world; the gate to the sheepfold; the good shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the way, the truth, and the life; the true vine. He backs His words with signs: healing the sick and paralysed; giving sight to the blind; raising the dead; feeding the five thousand; walking on water; turning water into wine.

John allows the witnesses to testify about Jesus: John the Baptist (John 1:20); Andrew (1:40); Philip (1:45); Nathanael (1:49); the woman (4:29); Moses (5:46); John himself (21:24); and God the Father (8:18). The key truth here is to realise that Jesus is one with God. He is the Son of God!

See the signs, hear the witnesses, listen to the claims, examine the evidence, and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so become representatives of the new creation, living out a new quality of life—eternal life—in this crumbling old creation.

All Glory to Him,
David Cook



We're glad you've decided to join us on a journey into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ!

For over 50 years, we have been known for our daily Bible reading notes, *Our Daily Bread*. Many readers enjoy the pithy, inspiring, and relevant articles that point them to God and the wisdom and promises of His unchanging Word.

Building on the foundation of *Our Daily Bread*, we have developed this devotional series to help believers spend time with God in His Word, book by book. We trust this daily meditation on God's Word will draw you into a closer relationship with Him through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

How to use this resource

READ: This book is designed to be read alongside God's Word as you journey with Him. It offers explanatory notes to help you understand the Scriptures in fresh ways.

REFLECT: The questions are designed to help you respond to God and His Word, letting Him change you from the inside out.

RECORD: The space provided allows you to keep a diary of your journey as you record your thoughts and jot down your responses.

An Overview

The author of the gospel is the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, brother of James, and one of the three “inner circle” disciples: Peter, James, and John. He never refers to himself directly in this gospel. He is most likely a disciple of John the Baptist, who leaves to follow Jesus (John 1:35–37). Probably written in AD 80–90, John is the latest of the gospels and thus more reflective on the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus.

The Structure of John

- 1:1–18 John’s prologue, in which he introduces his themes.
- 1:19–11:57 The book of signs, containing the first five of the seven “I am” statements and the signs attesting the words of Jesus.
- 12 The transition from Jesus’ public ministry to His preparation for His Passion.
- 13–17 The upper room teaching of Jesus, the night before His betrayal and death, including the last two “I am” statements.
- 18–21 The death, resurrection, and post-resurrection appearances of Jesus.

Key Verse

“No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” —John 1:18

Day 1

Read John 1:1–13

Words are powerful. They can be used to encourage or be the cause of depression. They can inform, mystify, persuade, sustain friendship, or cause deep distress. Words reveal thoughts; words reveal character; clear words explain.

John begins by telling us about God's Word, by which He reveals and explains himself. Uniquely, God's Word is a person, a pre-existent and eternal person, who was in the beginning with God and distinct from God (v. 1). God's Word was God. This divine Word made all things (v. 3), and is the source of light and life (vv. 4–5). The Word came into the world He created, and was not received by the world in general, or by His own people, Israel, in particular (vv. 10–11).

Those who received and believed the Word were given authority to be the children of God (vv. 12–13). So John tells us about the Word's relationship to God (vv. 1–2); His relationship to the world (vv. 3–4, 10–11); and His relationship to the believer (vv. 12–13).

We are introduced to John the Baptist, the forerunner and witness to the Word:

- He was sent from God (v. 6).
- He came as a witness to testify to the light (vv. 7–8).
- He came into the world before the light (vv. 8–9).

Although the full identity of the Word is not yet revealed, God has made every preparation for His coming amongst mankind. **John tells us that through receiving the Word, believing in Him, we become children of God.** He likens this to being born, but this birth is not by normal human cause; not by "human decision or a husband's will" (v. 13). The birth we need, the birth we crave, comes because of God's activity. This birth is His to give—"but born of God" (v. 13).

In this beautiful opening, John tells us that God the Word has visited us, John the Baptist was His witness, and that to receive the Word is like being born all over again. Such a birth comes not by any human means, but by God's initiative.



ThinkThrough

In *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer says that in spare moments, believers need to remind themselves of their identity: "I am a child of God, God is my Father, heaven is my home, every day is one day nearer heaven, my Saviour is my brother, every Christian is my brother [or sister] too."¹

¹J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973), 256.

Day 2

Read John 1:14–18

In today's reading, the Word is named. However, the key verse in this introduction is verse 14, where we are told that the Word takes on flesh and becomes a man. The word "flesh" and the expression "made his dwelling" are vital.

In the first century AD, there were many who believed that the spiritual and material could never mix, so that God and flesh could not meet. John asserts that the Word became a real human, "became flesh" (v. 14). With his Jewish readers in mind, John uses the expression, "made his dwelling", literally that He "tabernacled" among us.

This recalls the tabernacle of Exodus 33–34, where God met with Moses "as one speaks to a friend" (Exodus 33:11). Moses had asked to see God's glory, and from having seen Him, he became so radiant that his face needed to be covered when he met the people of Israel (Exodus 34:33).

Now God tabernacles among us, and we see His glory of the Word made flesh (v. 14). This is the one

of whom John the Baptist testifies (v. 15), the Word "full of grace and truth" (v. 14), and is the source of blessing upon blessing (v. 16). It was so gracious of God to give the law to Moses, but even greater grace has come through Jesus Christ (v. 17). **At last, the full identity of the Word is revealed, the Creator, the Source of light and life—it is Jesus Christ.**

Verse 18 is the summary of this prologue, which is itself a summary of John's gospel. Here is the human dilemma: "No one has ever seen God" (1 John 4:12). Humanity is largely in the dark, but on God's initiative, the Word of revelation becomes flesh.

The "one and only Son, who is himself God"—Jesus is the One with the unique nature, who is "in the closest relationship with the Father"—Jesus is the One in the unique place, literally in the Father's bosom, "has made him known"—Jesus has the unique ministry of revealing God (v. 18).

Day 3

Read John 1:19–51

John the Baptist again provides a model of witness, as he did in John 1:15.

A delegation from Jerusalem has come to investigate the impact of his ministry. John is insistent: he is not Elijah; he is not the Prophet, someone like Moses, as prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15. Then “who are you?” they ask (v. 22). John is the voice (v. 23), the forerunner spoken of in Malachi 4:5 and Isaiah 40:3. The reason he baptises is to awaken Israel and identify the Messiah (v. 31). John is not worthy of performing even a slave’s duty of untying the Messiah’s sandals (v. 27). The coming one is the baptiser with the Holy Spirit (v. 33). In both instances (v. 15 and here), John is the persistently self-effacing witness.

There follow three brief cameos of Jesus, each introduced by the phrase, “the next day”:

1. John says Jesus is the Lamb of God, the baptiser with the Holy Spirit, and the Son of God (vv. 29–34).
2. Again, in verse 35, Jesus is the Lamb of God. The two disciples of John hear John say this, but they don’t follow John; they follow Jesus instead (v. 37).
3. In verse 43, Jesus finds Philip, who finds Nathanael, who confesses Jesus is the Son of God, King of

Israel (v. 49). Andrew finds Simon (v. 41); Philip finds Nathanael (v. 45); but Jesus finds Philip (v. 43), who may have been overlooked by others.

The envelope is fully opened in verse 51. In a clear reference to Jacob’s ladder (Genesis 28:12), now it is Jesus who is the ladder linking heaven and earth.

Note also the titles and descriptions of Jesus here in John 1. Bible teacher J. C. Ryle finds twenty-one descriptions of Jesus in this chapter, such as rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel, Messiah, but now the most exalted title of all is: Son of Man (v. 51)—the one with universal authority and everlasting dominion as prophesied in Daniel 7:13–14. He is fully God and fully man.

Verse 37 is God’s pattern for saving people: they hear the witness but don’t follow the witness; instead they follow Jesus. When Billy Graham left Sydney after his first crusade in 1959, crowds bid him farewell from Sydney airport. As they did, he spoke briefly from John 1:37 where the people heard John, but followed Jesus.

This is the pattern: we hear John, we hear Billy, but we follow Jesus!

Day 4

Read John 1:35–51

John tells us that Andrew followed Jesus on John the Baptist's testimony (v. 40). Andrew tells his brother, Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah" (v. 41).

We then read that the only disciple whom Jesus seeks out in this chapter, Philip, who like Andrew and Peter is from Bethsaida, is told by Jesus, "Follow me." Philip then goes on to find Nathanael, who confesses Jesus as the "Son of God; you are the king of Israel" (v. 49).

John records that every other disciple comes on the recommendation of someone else; throughout his gospel, only Philip is handpicked by Jesus. Why? One view notes that every other mention of Philip in this gospel stresses his ordinariness:

- In John 6:5–7, Jesus asks Philip where they can buy bread to feed the 5,000. Philip's reply? "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Philip's reply shows that he was thinking like any ordinary mortal: "It is impossible".
- In John 12:20–22, when the Greeks ask to see Jesus, Philip takes them to Andrew, perhaps lacking the courage to go to Jesus alone. His timidity shows his ordinariness.
- In John 14:8–9, Philip asks to see the Father and "that will be

enough for us". Jesus expresses exasperation, "even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father". Philip's failure to grasp the true identity of Jesus despite having followed Him for so long reveals how spiritually inadequate and hence how ordinary he was.

Philip is remarkable for his ordinariness. He is Mr. Average among the disciples. Yet Jesus, upon finding Philip, said to him, "Follow me" (v. 43).

IQ scales and personality ratings are standards that may have their uses in this world. **In God's kingdom, however, there is a place for everyone.** Paul talks about reaching Jews and Greeks, wise and foolish—no one is off limits (Romans 1:14). In Revelation, John sees heaven populated by every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9). And, he might well have added, of every social status, intelligence level, and personality type.

Those who follow Jesus all have a place and great potential in the kingdom, whether they are above average, below average, or just average.

Day 5

Read John 2:1–11

The original text of Scripture was without chapter and verse divisions—chapters were added in the thirteenth century and verses in the sixteenth—so the writer had to indicate divisions in other ways. The way John marks this section is by the bookends: the first (John 2:1–11) and second (4:43–54) signs that Jesus performs in Cana.

The theme of this section is “The Old and New”. As a whole, it emphasises:

- With Jesus, the new has come: He turns water into wine; He is the new temple where God and people meet; He makes people new and quenches eternal thirst by giving eternal life.
- Jesus knows all things: He knows what is in people (John 2:25); He knows what Nicodemus needs; He knows all about the woman (4:29, 39); He knows that the official's son would live.

Jesus comes to Cana to grace a wedding with His presence. It seems to be a family occasion; Jesus' mother is invited, Jesus is invited, and generously, His new disciples are included in the invitation.

Perhaps the hosts' generosity extended too far, because they ran out of wine. Mary is told, presumably because she is the senior family

member present. She tells Jesus, her eldest son, who responds respectfully (see also John 19:26). “Woman” indicates that there is a change in Jesus' priorities—He has placed His heavenly Father and His business first. Henceforth, Jesus no longer goes by His earthly parents' timetable and orders; He's going to follow only His heavenly Father's schedule and instructions.

There are six jars containing about 420 to 750 litres of water for cleansing, the equivalent of between 560 to 1,000 bottles of wine. They are filled and some is drawn off, leading the master of ceremonies to commend the bridegroom for the excellence of his wine; it is even better than the earlier provision.

Without touching or speaking, Jesus has revealed His glory (v. 11).

Just like God, Jesus has the same power to create. The conclusion is clear: He is sovereign (and deity).

Furthermore, the wedding feast with its new wine signifies the coming of God's kingdom, where the old order gives way to the new, ushered in by the Messiah as prophesied (Isaiah 9:1–7). He does not make stones into bread to satisfy Satan's demand (Matthew 4:1–4), but He turns water into wine to reveal His

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Discovery House®
from Our Daily Bread Ministries

Please direct all correspondence to the office nearest you:

Australia

Our Daily Bread Ministries
PO Box 15, Kilsyth, VIC 3137, Australia
Tel: (+61-3) 9761-7086 • Email: australia@odb.org

Hong Kong

Our Daily Bread Ministries Ltd
PO Box 74025, Kowloon Central Post Office, Kowloon, Hong Kong
Tel: (+852) 2626-1102 • Fax: (+852) 2626-0216 • Email: hongkong@odb.org

Indonesia

ODB Indonesia
PO Box 2500, Jakarta 11025, Indonesia
Tel: (+62-21) 2902-8950 • Fax: (+62-21) 5435-1975 • Email: indonesia@odb.org

Japan

Daily Bread Co Ltd
PO Box 46, Ikoma Nara 630-0291, Japan
Email: japan@odb.org

Malaysia

Our Daily Bread Berhad
PO Box 86, Taman Sri Tebrau, 80057 Johor Bahru, Malaysia
Tel: (+060-7) 353-1718 • Fax: (+060-7) 353-4439 • Email: malaysia@odb.org

New Zealand

Our Daily Bread Ministries
PO Box 303095, North Harbour, Auckland 0751, New Zealand
Tel: (+64-9) 444-4146 • Email: newzealand@odb.org

Philippines

Our Daily Bread Ministries Inc
PO Box 288, Greenhills 0410 Metro Manila
Tel: (+63-2) 705-1355 • Fax: (+63-2) 725-5058 • Email: philippines@odb.org

Taiwan

Our Daily Bread Ministries Foundation
PO Box 260 Taipei Datong, Taipei City 10399, Taiwan ROC
Tel: (+886-2) 2585-5340 • Fax: (+886-2) 2585-5349 • Email: taiwan@odb.org

Singapore

Our Daily Bread Ministries Asia Ltd
5 Pereira Road #07-01, Asiawide Industrial Building, Singapore 368025
Tel: (+65) 6858-0900 • Fax: (+65) 6858-0400 • Email: singapore@odb.org

Sri Lanka

Our Daily Bread Ministries
PO Box 19, Dehiwala 10350, Sri Lanka
Tel: (+94-11) 272 1252 • Fax: (+94-11) 271 7626 • Email: srilanka@odb.org

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5 Pereira Road, #07-01 Asiawide Industrial Building,
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Journey Through **John**

The gospel of John begins with a bold declaration: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God”. It then poetically introduces Jesus Christ as God incarnate—not just God himself, but also the perfect, visible expression of an invisible God whom mankind could see, hear, touch, and relate to. Unsure of your faith? Dig into the gospel of John. Discover who this unique Son of God is and anchor your faith on solid ground.

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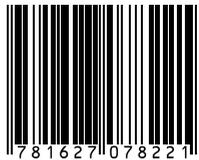
David Cook was Principal of the Sydney Missionary and Bible College for 26 years. He is an accomplished writer and has authored Bible commentaries, books on the Minor Prophets, and several Bible study guides.



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