

EVERY DAY WITH THE FATHER

EVERY DAY
WITH THE
*F*ATHER

366
DEVOTIONAL READINGS
FROM
JOHN'S GOSPEL

MARK STIBBE

MONARCH
BOOKS

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*This book is dedicated with my heartfelt
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The Father's House Trust

Dr Mark Stibbe is the founder and leader of the Father's House Trust, a charity dedicated to taking the message of the love of the Father all over the world, and to bringing an end to fatherlessness on the earth.

The Father's House Trust seeks to fulfil this vision through five main objectives.

First, the Trust runs schools for leaders that major on the message of the Father's love and the healing of wounded hearts. These are home-based schools in Watford where the Father's House is located. These schools focus on an encounter with the transformative power of God's love.

Second, the Trust runs the same kinds of schools but away from its home base in Watford, and in churches with which the Trust feels a particular partnership. These partner churches are developing all over the world and have a city-changing impact.

Thirdly, the Trust is involved in running annual conferences that serve its vision. These are again based in our own town of Watford. In addition, Mark Stibbe and his team contribute to strategic conferences in the UK and abroad.

Fourthly, the Trust seeks to engage actively with contemporary culture, and specifically to put fatherhood and fatherlessness on the map in realms like government, education, the media, the arts, and family life. The Trust seeks to influence the influencers in these realms.

Fifthly, the Trust is passionate about ministering to the poor and fighting for the cause of the orphan and the widow, in accordance with the biblical mandate to look after those without fathers and those who have lost their husbands (James 1:27).

To find out more about the Trust, please consult the website at www.fathershousetrust.com.

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Thank you all.

Introduction

If you've never read through a whole Gospel before, then I want to invite you to join me on this journey through one of the greatest stories ever told – the Gospel According to John.

John's Gospel is undoubtedly a book full of spiritual treasure. As we go through its verses day by day, we are going to uncover John's glittering gold and gleaming gems.

We will see that the greatest of these treasures is the Fatherhood of God. John's most memorable achievement is his focus on God as Father – as Papa, Daddy, or Dad. This is the jewel in his crown.

In *Every Day with the Father* I am going to show you how Jesus reveals the Father's love. Everything Jesus says and does in John's Gospel is like a window onto the world's greatest Dad.

In addition, I will try to explain what it means to be an adopted daughter or son of this affectionate Father. Through Jesus (the perfect Son) we will discover what it really means to be a child of God.

So come on a treasure hunt with me. Enjoy the pleasures of each verse but also appreciate the flow of the whole story – from its beginning on the shores of eternity to its ending on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

You will find as we travel through this Gospel that it truly is a gripping story – a story that builds and builds towards the magnificent drama of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Once you start on this path, you won't want to stop. John has pearls of wisdom that are more valuable and more profound than any found in even the most celebrated literary masterpieces.

These pearls are the shiny gifts of an extravagant Dad.

They are the love language of the Father that we've all been waiting for.

They are from heaven not earth.

So let's walk together on this journey.

And as we travel, let's pray this prayer:

Dear God, as I read the pages of this book, would you father me. Help me to experience your embrace and encounter your fatherly love. And teach me what it really means to be your child, in Jesus' name, and through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the beginning was the Word... .

John 1:1

As we begin these devotional readings, it feels appropriate to look at a verse that deals with beginnings. Here, John flies on eagle's wings to the highest heights to reveal a view that no other Gospel writer gives us. Caught up in the prophetic currents of the Holy Spirit, he takes us back to the start of history and to the origins of the universe. Using words that are very reminiscent of the opening of the book of Genesis, John tells us that at the creation of all things the *Word* existed.

What is this "Word"? The plain answer is that the Word is God's speech. According to the Old Testament, God created all things through his spoken word. During the first six days of creation, God spoke everything into being. This is emphasized in the simple words, "And God said" in Genesis chapter 1.

When John talks about the *Word* he is telling us that God speaks. Accordingly, we should never forget that we worship a Father who reveals his heart and who communicates with his creatures. When the Father speaks, his speech is loving and life-giving.

Aren't you happy that we worship such a Father? There are so many dads today who are either physically or emotionally absent. Our heavenly Father is neither. He is present to us, though we often do not see him, and he speaks to us, though we often don't hear him.

A few verses later John will make it clear that the Word is Jesus. This shows that it is supremely and uniquely through Jesus that our heavenly Father has communicated with his lost and estranged children. If it weren't for Jesus, we would still be groping around in the dark, desperately trying to find God. But in Jesus, the Father has found us. He has come looking for his spiritual orphans and has spoken clearly to us and told us what we must do if we are to become his children and find our heart's true home in him. I am so grateful that Jesus is the Father's Word to us. He is truly the Father's love language.

Devotion: *Dear loving, heavenly Abba, Father, thank you that you have spoken to us through your Son, Jesus, and that we worship a Dad who loves to speak to his children. At the beginning of this book, please help me to make a brand new start in my friendship with you. Amen.*

... and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:1

How big is your picture of Jesus? Do you worship a small, finite Jesus? Or do you worship a Jesus who is infinite, glorious, majestic, unlimited, and divine?

John tells us that before the universe was formed and the earth was created, the Word existed with God, and that the Word was at the same time God. If the Word is Jesus then this is momentous! It means that Jesus *was with* God and that Jesus *was* God. It means in fact that Jesus was not just a human being in history; he was and is a divine being in eternity.

Many people today reduce the person of Jesus either by claiming that he is a mythical figure or by saying that he was just a charismatic holy man. But Jesus really did exist and, according to the New Testament writers, he was more than just a man, more than just a prophet or a teacher. He was – and is – God!

John accordingly opens the curtains onto a truly panoramic and other-worldly landscape of revelation in this verse. He tells us that Jesus existed before he was born as a baby and that he was with the Father before creation. He tells us that the Son is separate from the Father and yet mysteriously the same as the Father.

Here of course we run straight into the mystery of the Trinity. Christians believe that God is three persons in one being. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three separate persons yet all one God.

At the very start of all things, John says that the Father and the Son existed. They had always existed (along with the person of the Holy Spirit). Unlike the universe, they never came into being. They are uncreated and eternal. Doesn't that make you want to worship Jesus? He is more than a man and a Messiah, more than a preacher and a prophet. As Thomas will say at the end of John's Gospel, he is both our Lord and our God (John 20:28).

Devotion: *Dear loving, heavenly Abba, Father, your Son Jesus is truly unique. He is the Son who existed before the universe was made, the Son who is everlasting and divine. Help me to declare that Jesus is my Lord and my God. Amen.*

He was with God in the beginning.

John 1:2

The “Word” is one of the titles for Jesus that we find only in John’s Gospel. When John writes that Jesus-the-Word was with God in the beginning, he is telling us that the Son was with the Father before all things came into being. Before he created anything, the Son lived with the Father. Before time and space were called into being, Jesus simply enjoyed his Father’s presence.

It is important to remember that the Son has existed forever with the Father and will exist forever with the Father. The Son has always been at the Father’s side. Before the dawn of history, the Son and the Father laughed, played, and rejoiced together. Before the first sunrise and the first birdsong, the Son was simply *with* the Father, as John the master storyteller reveals.

I have recently come back from a trip to the United States. My twin sister Claire moved out there many years ago. Having not seen her for a long time I felt it was time to go and visit her. I took my youngest son Sam with me. We had a great time travelling together. One of our best times was on a long, seven-hour road trip from Hobbes to Albuquerque. I was driving and Sam was sitting on my right-hand side listening to the music on the radio as we slowly made our way through the long, straight desert roads. For hours we just sat and laughed together, occasionally breaking into song as a familiar hit was played on the radio. It was great fun. I’ll never forget it.

What a thing it is for a father to enjoy an affectionate, easy relationship with their son or daughter. What a beautiful thing it is for children and their dads to hang out and simply be together. If you have lacked this from your earthly father, know that you have it in your relationship with your heavenly Father.

John says that Jesus was with the Father “in the beginning”. The Son was *with* the Father – simply *being* with his Dad.

Devotion: *Dear loving, heavenly Abba, Father, we thank you that you are the kind of dad that loves to be with us, just as you do with your Son. Thank you that, like Jesus, we can enjoy your company and spend time in the beauty of your presence. Help us to soak in your love today. Amen.*